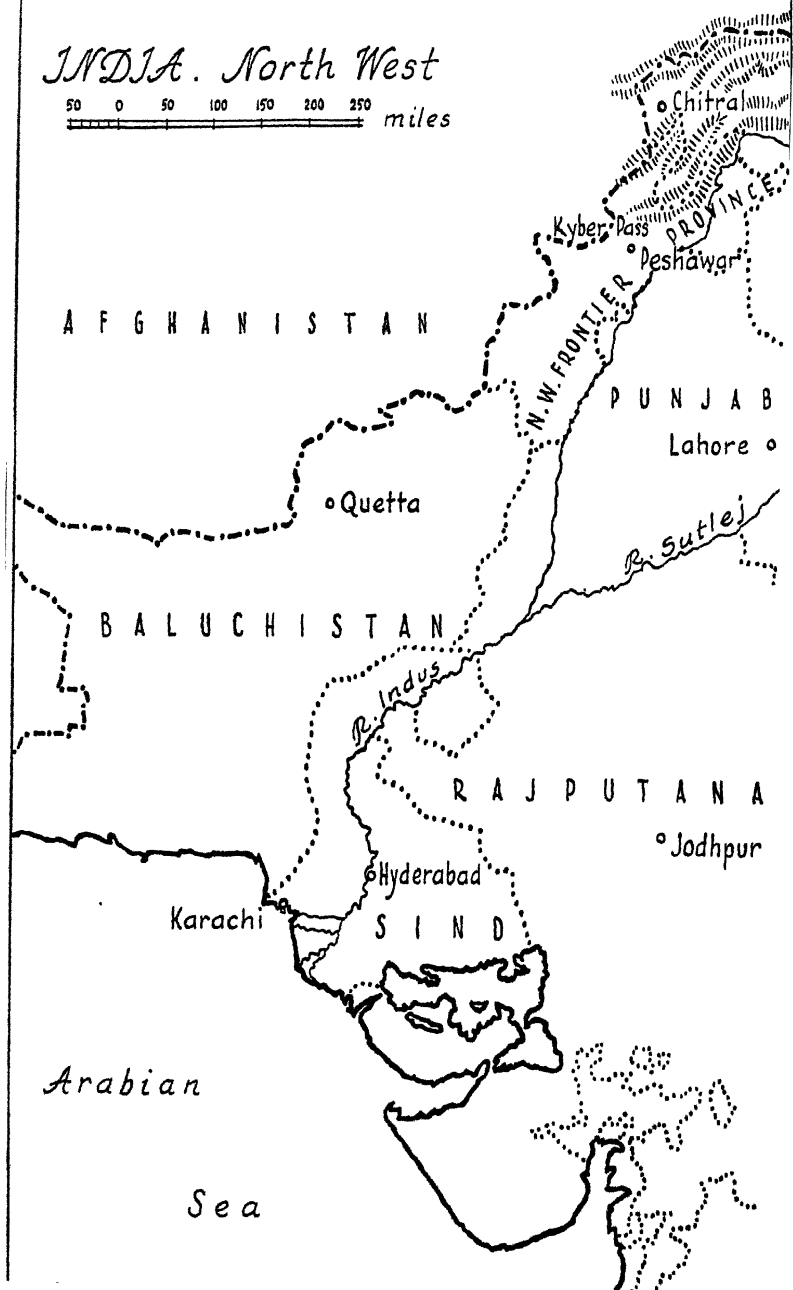


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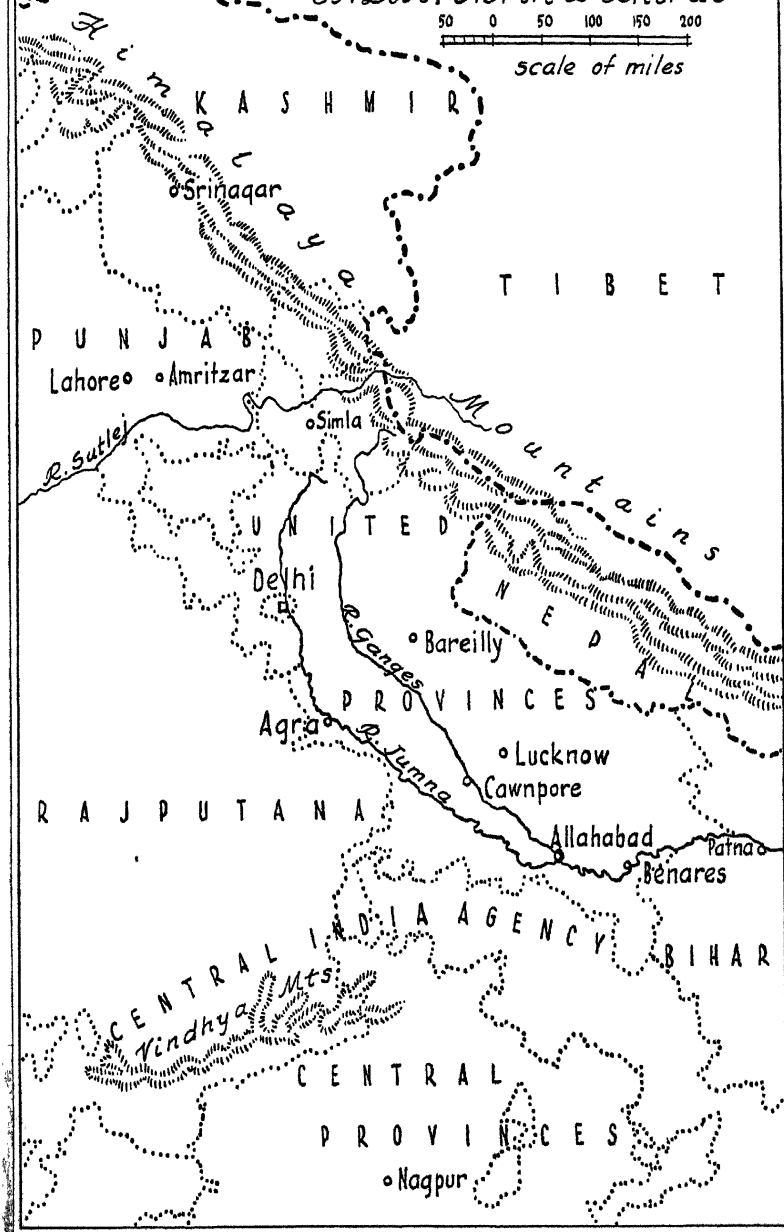
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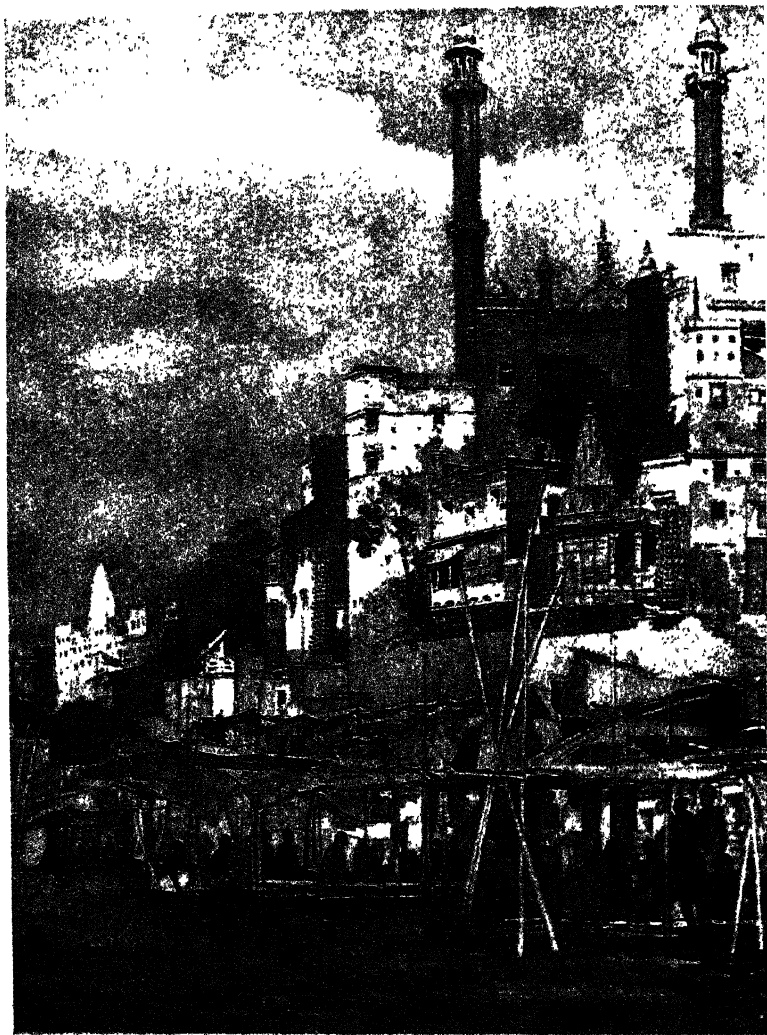
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W. J. GRANT

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## PREFACE

POSSIBLY you have noticed that there are dead facts and living facts. A dead fact is a scientist's fact; a living fact an artist's. It has always been my impression that the latter is truer than the former. There is more in a rock than its chemical content, and a flower in a botanist's drawing is but what his skeleton is to a Shakespeare. Knowledge, of course, must be accurate; but a mere tabulation of qualities and appearances does not, to my mind, constitute knowledge. Places and things are alive. Merely to state what they are and what they look like is to distort and mislead. The true descriptive writer must be warmed by the very soul of what he sees; he must *be* his subject just as a novelist must *be* his character. India has a soul choice and individual. My object in this book is to give that soul wings. There are no nebulous weavings of the imagination, however. Facts are stated with clearness and precision. But my constant endeavour is to give facts breath; to make them twinkle in vivid silver not just as points of light but as things that pulse and quiver as the sweetest and grandest of our constellations.

Probably no country in the world will overtake India in human interest. And yet I am convinced that we of the West have gone far astray in estimating India's value to modern thought. In the realm of religious philosophy she has done a great and precious thing; she has given to us the most searching examination of the ethical law the world is ever likely to have. No Greek was ever more splendid in his scientific fidelity than the quiet company of Indian thinkers who made the Upanishads and traced the whole beauteous outline of the Eastern spirit. In the following pages I have endeavoured to convey not only the grandeur of India's mind but also the loveliness of India's scenery. There are cities in India whose grace and charm are matched only by the sweetness of an immemorial religion. Nowhere else in the world have I been so exquisitely invaded by the mystic quality of life. To stand beside the holy

Ganges or in the shadow of some voiceless Dravidian temple on a slumberous Indian afternoon is to come near to things that are among the purest and tenderest of all human aspirations.

During the twelve odd years I have spent in the East I have never ceased to be enchanted not alone by her differences from the West, but also by a golden splendour in her spirit. India, indeed, has a preciousness which a materialistic age is in danger of missing. Some day the fragrance of her thought will win the hearts of men. This grim chase after our own tails which marks the present age cannot continue for ever. The future contains a new human urge towards the real beauty and holiness of life. When it comes India will be searched by loving eyes and defended by knightly hands.

This work tries to give as much general knowledge about our great Eastern Empire as possible, but I hope I have succeeded also in suggesting the rich, deep ecstasy which envelopes the Westerner in contact with a land of so unique a character that a whole literature would be required to give her a song worthy of her grace and majesty.

I have deliberately omitted Buddhism from my review of Indian religions because it no longer has a following among the Aryan race, although deeply respected in Burma, China, Ceylon, etc.

W. J. G.

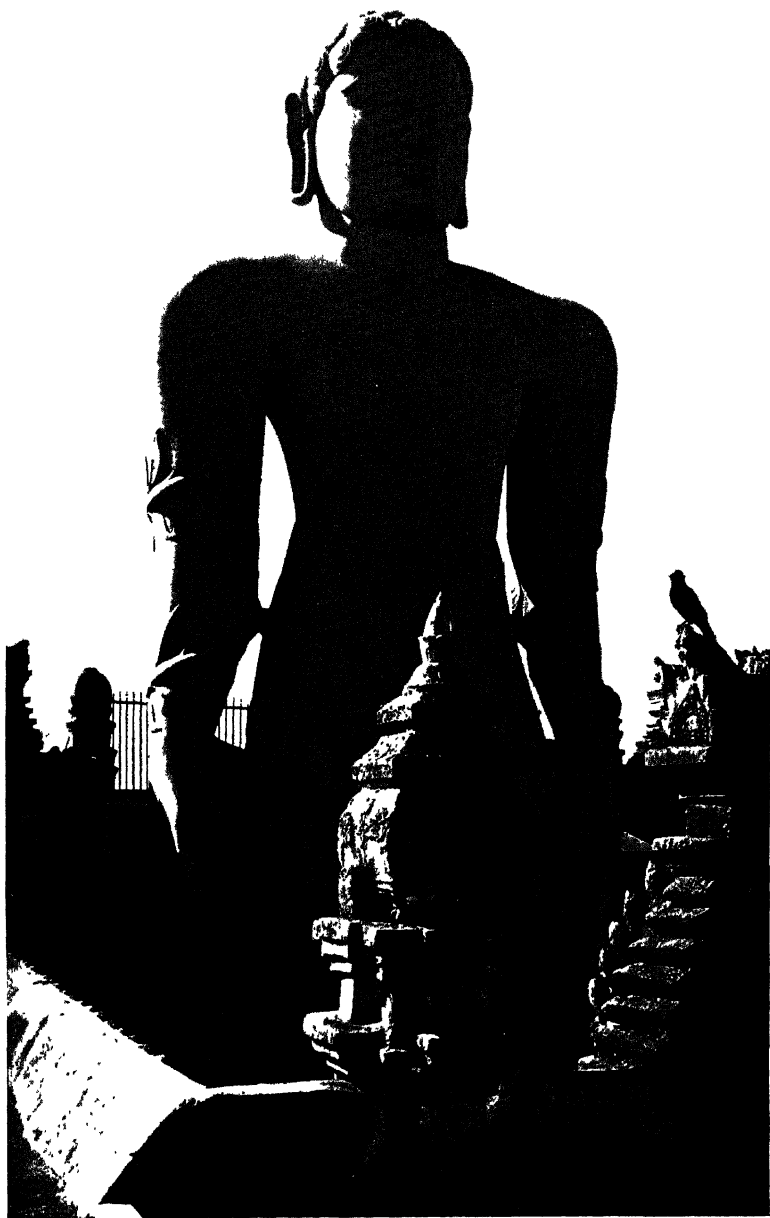
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2 Massive Hindu Statue, Sravanabelagolu, Mysore



3 Mohammedan Children in Festival Dress

## CHAPTER I

### SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

THE approach to the subject of India is littered with misconceptions. This is partly due to the West's ignorance of the East, but vastly more to the distressingly large number of writers who have failed to understand India. We hear with wearisome frequency of the "problem of India" and the "mystery of the East." India is no more a problem than Gibraltar is, and her mystery is but an unappreciated point of view. There has been trouble in India, but that trouble was a result of changes not only in the East but also in the West. There was no mystery about it, and, while it created a "problem" for thinkers who regard change as a disease and whose business it is to interpret the will of a people who do not know what they will, it had no sinister significance for those who looked on the turmoil with a comprehending eye.

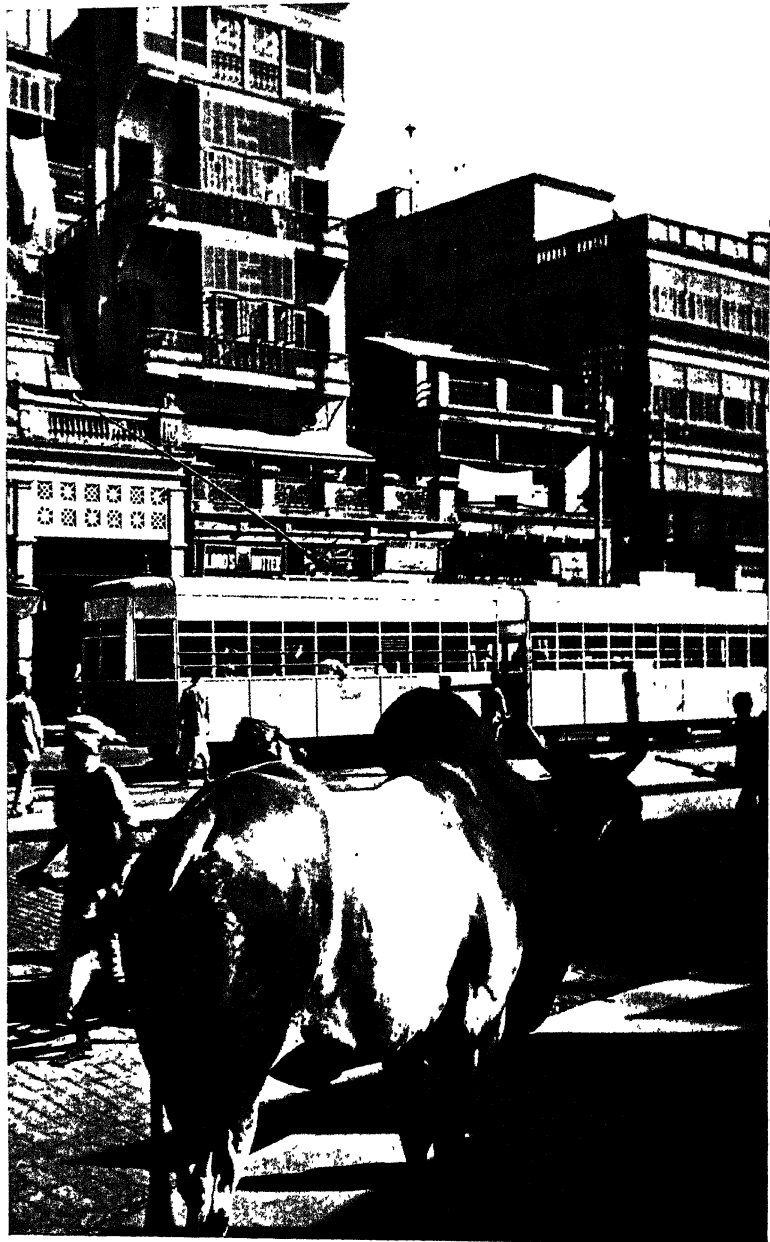
India, indeed, is not a singular phenomenon. She is not the only bad child. On the contrary, she is one of a whole family of bad children. Her aspirations may be good or bad, but they are aspirations common to all virile modern nations, and they have roots deeper than mere racial characteristics. The Chinese and the Indians have as much in common as a butcher's dog and a bachelor's hen. The one is stolid, prosaic and practical; the other vivacious, mercurial and imaginative. Both, however, share the same political aspirations. Whatever the rationalists say, there is in the governance of this world a strong principle of guidance. I do not say that it is a guidance in the right way and I do not claim it as a guidance in the wrong way, but I assert it as a compelling reality. It has brought about fundamental changes in the past; it is bringing them about with impressive swiftness in the present. One of these changes is man's attitude towards authority. Out of Victorianism came forth a belief that man was born to rule

himself; that the people's will was sacred and that education and enlightenment would always keep it sacred. Out of democracy has come a realisation that man's will is sacred only when it is capable of unity. When it is not, then it must be overruled by a single will. The two ideas—democracy and autocracy—are still in conflict. Perhaps they are symptomatic rather than contradictory. They may be interpretations of a race's qualities as much as art and literature are. Their consideration, however, need not detain us here. Japan was the first of the Eastern countries to experience the democratic aspiration. She was followed by India, Turkey, Afghanistan, China, Siam, Egypt, the Philippines, etc. Each of these countries is working out its own salvation in its own way. Some have succeeded completely, some only partially. China is less happy and more disorganised now than ever she was, but she is in the democratic inheritance. At the behest of some covert influence all these countries leaped at the same bait, i.e. that of rule by the people in a state free of all extraneous domination. In another place I draw my own conclusions as to whether this bait was good or bad, but for the moment I want it to be realised that India's aspirations were not an outrage on political convention. The sap of her desires was universal. It had spread from the West to the East. And it so spread just as all human ideas do, by contact and the curious ignition that seems instinct in human affairs.

Coeval with India's new views regarding government were our new views regarding colonies. There was growing up in Britain the philosophy that if democracy was good at home it was not necessarily bad abroad. Logic, that bugbear of human affairs, was pressing home on leaders of thought—particularly Labour thought—that a free race could not conscientiously keep another in bondage. India's yoke was easy, but our conscience was not light. The East learned more from the West than possibly the West ever expected. It is a strange feature of human nature that it is sometimes divided against itself. One part of it sets out to do one thing and the other



4 Pilgrims in Southern India



5 A Sacred Cow in a Calcutta Street

to do another. I believe that the British policy towards India was a sincere attempt to make her capable of self-government, and yet when India announced that she was ready for self-government Britain was shocked. She shuddered at India's impertinence. We heard grumbles against the quality of modern political authority and sighs about losing our grip on overseas possessions. We accused ourselves of educating other races in order that they should have the hardihood to kick us out.

It was revealed to very few that India was doing exactly what human reason would have expected her to do, and that she was responding to the peculiar nature of our political treatment in the only way consistent with British policy. Some there are who consider that we are doing the same thing with equally disengaging results in South Africa, and that if logic is to be allowed a free hand in Imperial politics the tide of trouble and discontent is far from flood. That, however, is another matter. What I desire to stress at the moment is that the political troubles in India are no more an occasion for surprise than yesterday's sunrise or that a summer day should be longer than a winter day; also that Britain was as much their source as India.

And what of India's mystery? Again we must disembowel racial contradictions. Britain is nominally a religious country. She, in company with other nations in the Western tradition, is beautified with Gothic churches. Sunday is still nominally the Lord's Day even if on it He is frequently made to play golf and throw darts in a back garden. But as soon as any other country takes its religion seriously Britain looks on it as a farmer would on a turnip that grew up to be a cherub. India takes her religion seriously; that is her "mystery" as far as the West is concerned. In the Middle Ages the whole civilised world was acutely religious. When Duns Scotus penned his thoughts an irreligious people was regarded as mysterious; to-day, if a nation has the turpitude to act in accordance with its beliefs it is looked on as a psychological



freak. In many directions India still tries to walk in the way of the saints. She sometimes even introduces ethical considerations into politics. She commits the outrage of believing that bad politics cannot be good religion. The result is hands of holy horror in Britain. The mystery of the East is become a basis of complaint; a sin against practical affairs.

I do not say that ethics makes a good blend with politics. It may, on the contrary, be easy to demonstrate that the one is about as compatible with the other as an ounce of salt with a pound of sugar. But if they are incompatible why pretend that they are not? Britain feels their incompatibility but does not say so; India does not feel their incompatibility and acts accordingly. Herein has lain the cause of much misunderstanding between the two countries. The secret of Mr. Gandhi's power is that he is religious and that all his political acts are religious. When the workers of a Bombay mill go on strike they are activated by a religious background. In India even the most material considerations are embedded in religion. A squad of coolies on a Calcutta wharf may argue that two rupees a day is inadequate recompense for the work done; but the tincture of their logic is religious. Religion is the stage for all Indian thought and action. To India abstract freedom is like abstract clothing or a reasoned argument acting for a plate of curry. There is still no pure politics in India. Hence her mystery. Hence the pitiable statements on her by Labour and other leaders who treat Cawnpore as they treat Croydon and who have not the philosophical reach to see that there are more things in heaven and earth than a minimum wage and a forty-hour week.

It is a dismaying characteristic of our Western outlook that it simply cannot conceive of any other outlook. We have been so sweetly embosomed in our own that any other comes near the reprehensible. Under certain constellations that may be an advantage; it certainly is not when we, like a famous statesman, are asked to rule every island but our own. It stereotypes our methods and limits our understanding. It

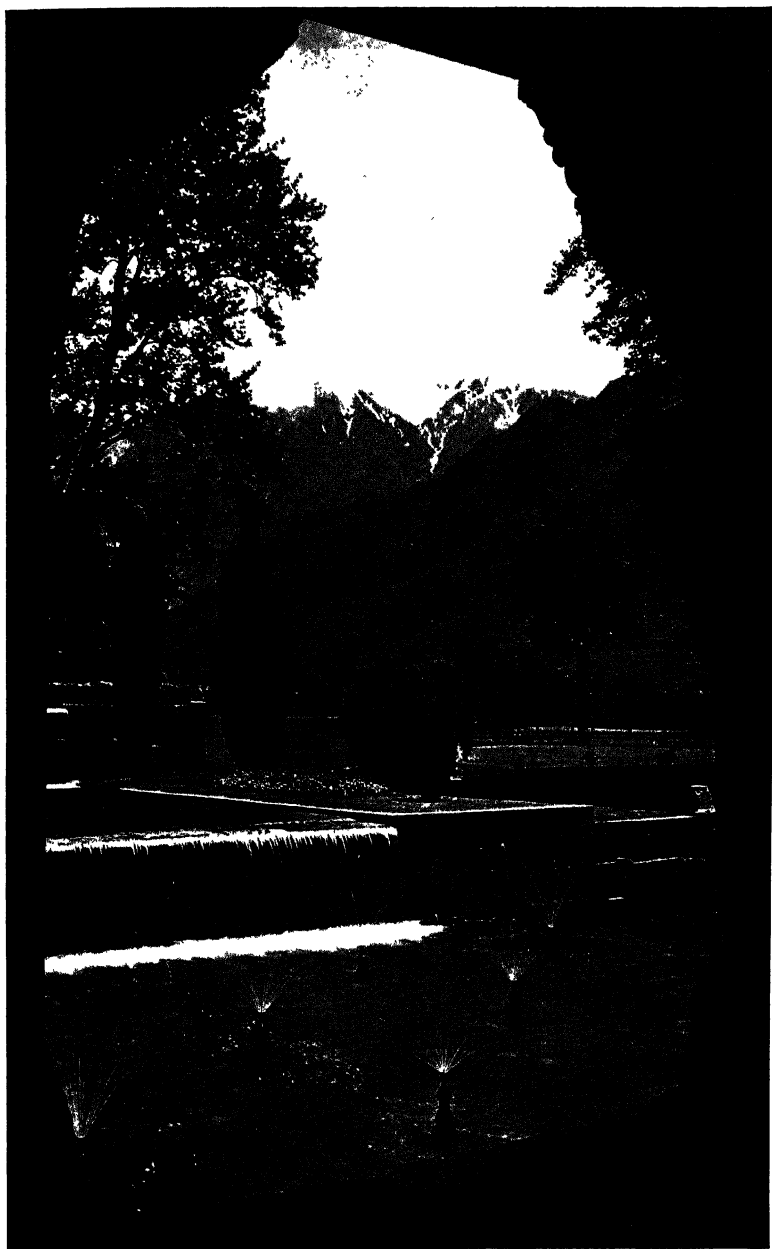
creates problems where there need be none and raises mysteries that are as natural as the trees in our gardens.

That India is a land of romance is another misconception. There can be no question of her perennial interest; she is aged in culture and her experience in religious development is vast; the inspiration behind her art has had its ice ages as well as its periods of creative warmth; the scenic splendours of India range from the sublimity of the Himalayas to the wide green monotony of Bengal; there is as much race divergence in India as there is in the whole of Europe, and the profundity of her forests offers the keenest hunters of big game all he can desire in the way of adventure; but to say that India is romantic is to declare that a portrait by Lawrence is a landscape by Crome. India "calls" irresistibly to all who desire to see why the East is not the West; to those who crave an education on a side of human life wholly different from the scientific methods of the present; to the choice intelligences who refuse to believe that a thing that strives is always brave and sufficient, but she cannot be described as romantic. She is grave and old and stupendous. Her accents are for the calm and gracious. She has nothing to say to the day-tripper or the engaging hordes who in the future will spend air-borne week-ends on the Calcutta *maidan*, mouth-organ and sand-spade complete. Her temples are laden with symbolism in whose external ugliness lie internal beauties. India, in short, is difficult to understand when we approach her as we do a Bath bun or a proposition in Euclid. To the sensationally facile she turns not only a deaf but a contemptuous ear. For those who love and understand her she is a paradise of comfort and inspiration, but the vulgarity of modern romance is her eternal enemy.

It is, however, true that India is royal. She has been royal since its instinctive trek through the jungles north of the Himalayas forced the first Aryan tribe to regard itself as a distinctive entity. There can be little doubt that India's early organisation was instinctive; the strongest or oldest of the

tribe fell naturally into the role of leader and was given an obedience based on economic and circumstantial necessity. It is also true that the Indian idea of royalty changed fundamentally in its later development; divinity took the place of instinctive consent; but from the very earliest tribal manifestations one person specially qualified was an essential part of the national life. I shall suggest later that much that is in the Aryan social system was absorbed from the Indus people who established a surprisingly high civilisation at the mouth of the Indus long before the Aryan invaders fought their way south. Nevertheless, India has been royal at heart from the very foundations of her memory.

Our sublimest delusion is that India is backward. This predicates, of course, that we are progressive. If backwardness and progress depend on the rate at which one can gobble up vanities perhaps India does need our aid; but one cannot help coming to the conclusion, even in an age when fat heifers at Islington are more deeply prized than sonatas by Mozart, that India's devotion to being good rather than to being clever comes nearer the heart of a true civilisation. Cleverness dies on the tongue like a social pleasantry; goodness echoes round the universe in an unextinguishable reality. We in the West are too busy to see that science without soul is like words without meaning. Religion, we say in the sweetness of our superiority, has made cruel wars and vengeful divisions. Light is what we need, not darkness; clarity, not mystery. Practically all that science has done for a hundred years is to mystify. It may have shown us that the pride of Sirius is but the heavenly father of a bedroom candle; that Hampstead Heath is the last slobberings of a glacier and not something fashioned for fairies to dance on. It may even have convinced us that a tub in a washhouse is only a tub in a washhouse when it has around it that created uncreation which human beings call appearances; but I cannot see that such meritorious achievements tell us anything beyond the fact that we are the pagoda slaves of mystery; that God and not man rules the



6 Kashmir: The Shalimar Water Gardens



7 Kinchinjunga, seen through the infra-red filter from a distance of 100 miles

universe and that the counting of hairs instead of the listening to heartbeats is the most effective way of studying life's quality. Surely if civilisation is a moral thing it should demand moral values and not material illusions for its sustenance.

Religion when misapplied has certainly caused wars and vengeful divisions. But it comes not within a thousand miles of being so warlike or so vengeful in its divisions as science and materialism. How many lives did they destroy in the Great War? Have they made the earth more brotherly or the human heart less prone to mistrust? India's greatness is in her humility; her weakness is her strength. She is both wiser and more effective than the West, for does she not declare that reform is not a new shirt on Sunday morning but a clean heart at the Throne of Grace? Justice without the spirit of justice is as much of an achievement as a river without its water.

## CHAPTER II

### TOPOGRAPHY AND TRADE

IF we look at a map of India we observe that she is pear-shaped; that her broadest part is at the base of the Himalayas and that she narrows to a point at Cape Comorin in the south. The Himalayan ranges are, it need not be emphasised, the highest in the world. Naturally, therefore, we have India's three largest rivers flowing from these splendid mountains. The River Indus rises between the southern and northern ranges of the Himalayas and bursts through to the Indian plains flowing south-west; the Brahmaputra has its source in much the same locality, but flows east until it finds an opportunity to breach the great mountains, turning south-west to join the Ganges. The Ganges comes to life on the southern slope of the Himalayas and, flowing south-east, forms one of the richest and most fertile regions in all India. The Himalayas are shaped roughly like a half-moon, 1,500 miles long, and are the bastions that have defended India since the emergence of the human race. From both their eastern and western extremities they throw off spurs which add to their protectiveness. The eastern spur is that which divides Assam from Burma, and the western runs down to the sea carrying such names as Safed-Koh, the Suliman and Hala Mountains. Within these protective arms and close to the Himalayas are the independent states of Nepal and Bhutan. At the junction between the western spur and the Himalayan ranges is situated the famous Khyber Pass around which the defenders of India keep such watchful eyes.

Running across India from east to west roughly from Bengal to Bombay are the broken and irregular Vindhya Mountains. Their height ranges from 1,500 feet to over 4,000 feet. Their two best-known peaks are Mount Abu on



8 Loading Jute



9 Native Boats  
ON THE HOOGLY





10 Street Market, Jaipur



11 Hindu Brass Shop, Peshawar

BAZAAR SCENES

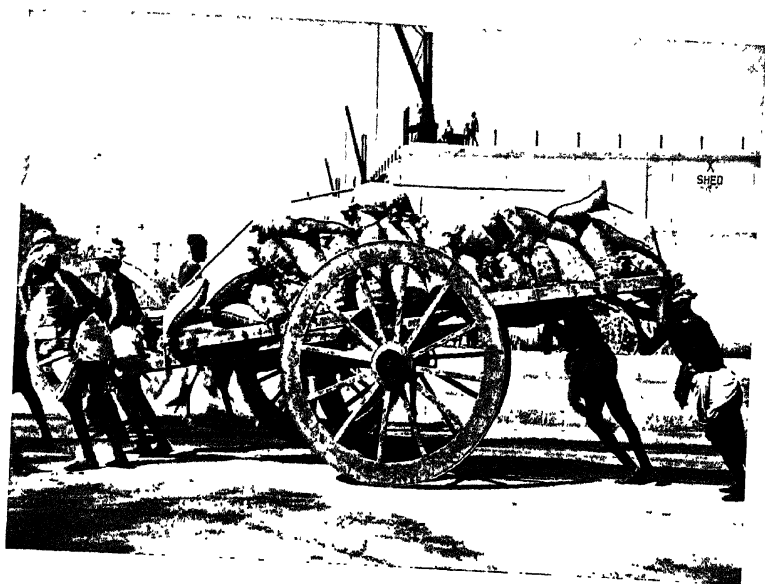
the west and Mount Parasnath on the east. From the two extremities of the Vindhyan system stretch southward until they meet above Cape Comorin the Eastern and Western Ghats with an average elevation of 1,500 feet and 3,000 feet respectively. The triangular plateau thus enclosed has an elevation of from 1,000 to 3,000 feet and includes the delightful Nilgiri Mountains and the well-run native state of Mysore.

On the vast plains south of the Himalayas, watered by the Indus, the Ganges and other lesser rivers; along the flat lands on the eastern side of the Eastern Ghats and, to a lesser extent, along the seaward base of the Western Ghats India grows vast quantities of rice, the export of which brings her over £30,000,000 per annum, millets, pulses, wheat (occupying 24,000,000 acres in the United Provinces and the Punjab), raw cotton, oil seeds, jute, etc. Bombay and the Central Provinces are the main cotton-growing areas (over 18,000,000 acres), while Bengal is famous for its jute.

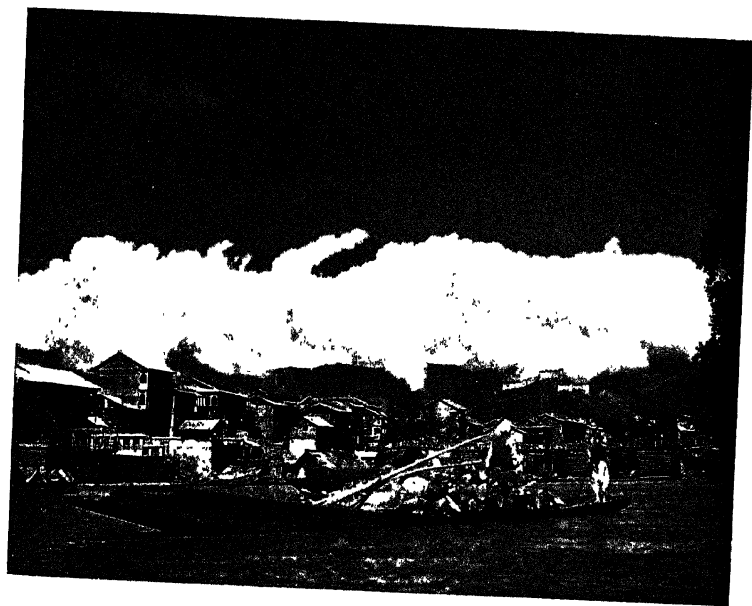
India's main imports are cotton and cotton goods which reach the considerable total of (in thousands of rupees) 27,89,62, with machinery and millwork coming next with 13,68,16. India's cotton and cotton goods imports, indeed, form over 20 per cent of her total, while machinery and millwork imports make to the whole a percentage of over 10. The most striking decline in recent years as regards Indian imports has been in sugar. This is explained by the fact that India has been developing her own sugar-producing capacity with remarkable vigour since 1930. India's gradual recovery from the recent trade slump is evidenced by the fact that while in 1931-2 her total imports (in thousands of rupees) were 126,37,14, during the year 1935-6 they had advanced to 134,37,60.

Raw cotton, raw jute and jute manufactures, grain and tea make her most outstanding exports. Cotton accounts for about 22 per cent of her total exports, while jute manufactures

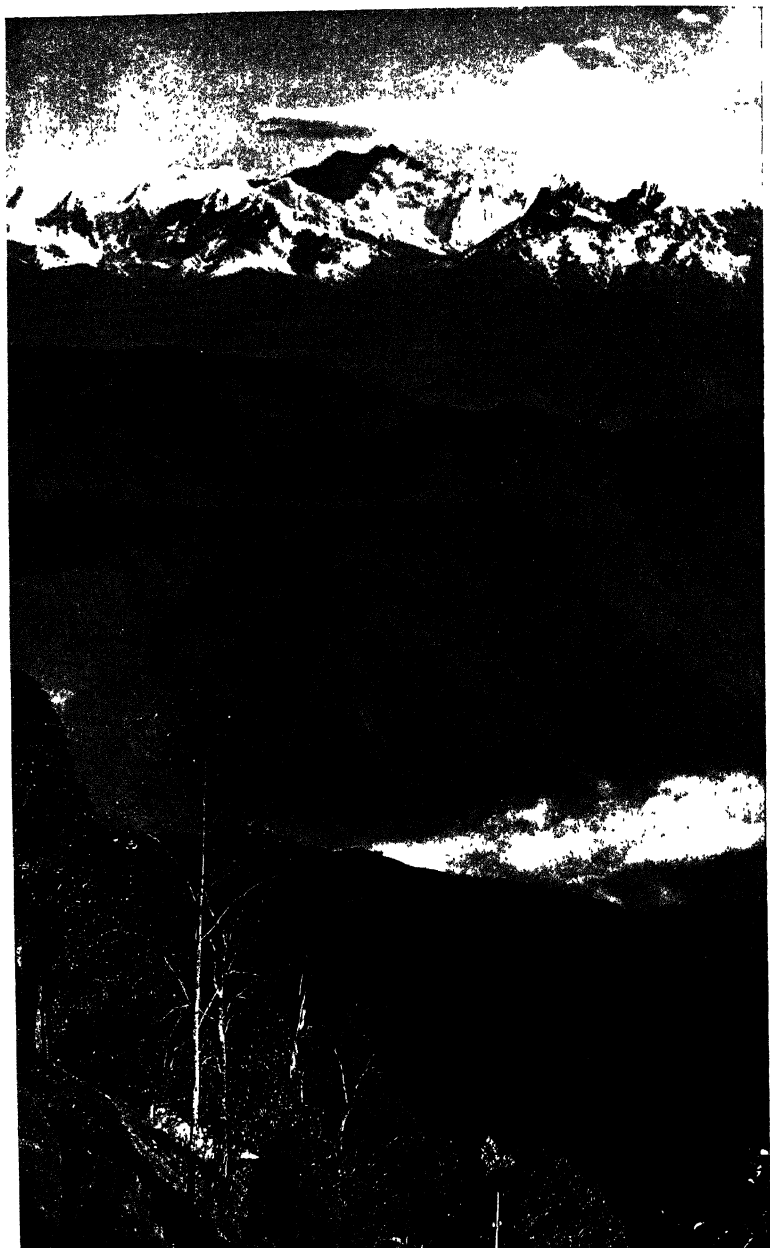
make 15 per cent; tea's importance as an item of export is attested to by the fact that it stands at nearly 13 per cent of the total. The value (in thousands of rupees) of the whole export trade of India is (for 1935-6) 160,52,19. In the year 1931-2 it was 155,88,86.



12 Native-drawn Cart, Madras



13 Native Barge, Rajputana  
PRIMITIVE TRANSPORT



14 The range of the Himalayas from near Darjeeling

### CHAPTER III

## SCENIC AND OTHER FEATURES

GEOGRAPHICALLY India is a Goliath. To deal adequately with her scenic properties, therefore, is a task to which I cannot address myself here. A rapid survey, however, may not be impossible. The country derives its name from the River Indus, flowing through the Punjab and Sind. To the Punjab came Darius and his legions in 508 B.C.; they were the first to tell the world something about the vast sunlit home of the Hindu race. The extent of India was scarcely realised, however, until Britain united her under the sway of "Pax Britannica." British India embraces the southern slopes of the Himalaya Mountains and allied systems to east and west; the Indo-Gangetic plain whose immensity reaches from the Bay of Bengal on the east to the Arabian Sea on the west and north to the Persian Gulf; it also includes most of the peninsula formed by the Vindhya and Western and Eastern Ghats which terminate above Cape Comorin. The population approaches 400,000,000, and, exclusive of the Indian states, British India is an area as large as Europe without Russia. It is over twelve times the size of Great Britain and Ireland, its ratio of population to the square mile being almost the same. If one embarked on a journey from Iceland to Portugal, at its end one would but have covered the distance between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin. The crossing of India between her two largest cities, Bombay and Calcutta, necessitates covering a distance almost as great as that from Rome to London. One province of British India (Bengal) is as large as France and has nearly twice her population.

Scenically India is rich. She has stupendous mountains and quiet, village-dotted plains. Her rivers sweep majestically on the plains and sing silver songs among the hills. The Himalayas form a great northern battlement with an average

height of about 18,000 feet. Their glories are Mount Everest in Nepal (29,002 feet); Kinchinjunga in Sikkim (28,156 feet); Dhawalagiri (26,826 feet); Nanda-devi (25,700 feet) and Chumalhari (23,929 feet).

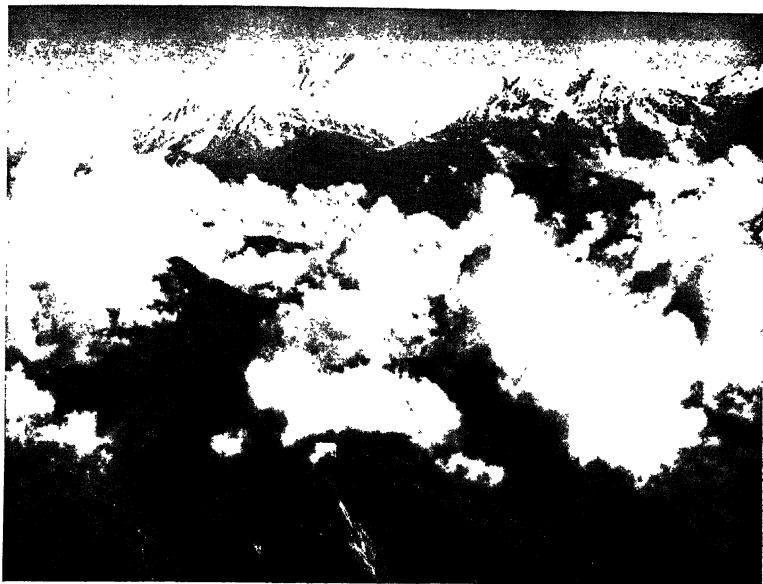
The grandeur of this region outwits description, its scale is so baffling. It is a dwelling-place for gods. I remember my first impression of these terrifying heights. I had travelled all night from Calcutta and was sleepily shaving when the train came to a standstill. I put my half-shaved face outside the window. For a moment there seemed to be nothing but the baked plains which I had watched for hours the evening previous. Then I chanced to look up. There away in the zenith were what appeared to be aerial icebergs; white mists lay along their splendour in long level strata.

"The snows," said someone.

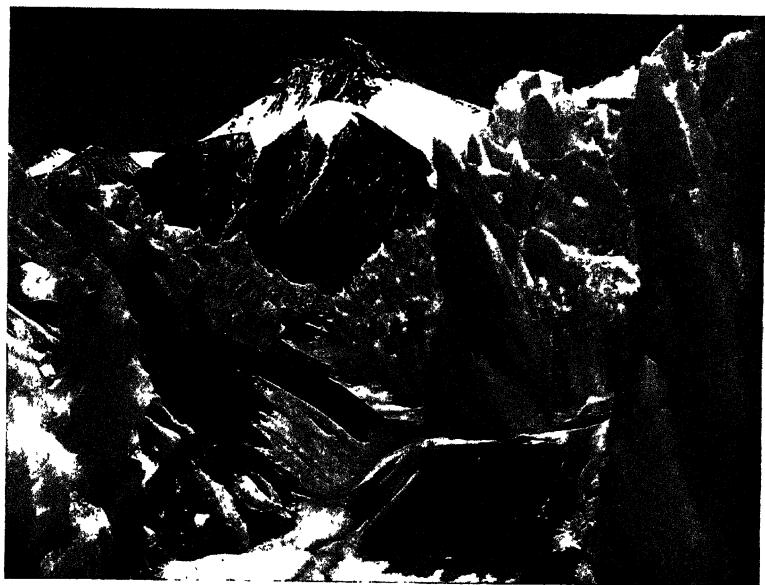
"The mountains, the mountains! Look—up there!" was shouted from one end of the train to the other. Never have I felt sublimity more powerfully in command of my feelings. I was an emotional consciousness, but that was all. If there is anything in the Hindu idea of being blended with a universality I came very near it at that moment. It was as if the heavens had opened and revealed God on His throne. A throne of stupendous whiteness, mystery, power, majesty. But above all, mystery—that mystery which no science can banish and no reason conquer.

And that is what the Himalayas have remained for me. They are still the mysterious home of the gods. Useless to tell me that the peaks are gneissic and the valleys metamorphic; that they are but considerable wrinkles caused by cosmic stresses. I shall continue to regard them as regions where the Supernatural walks with regal feet.

At Darjeeling, a township on the foothills, one can live in comfort with the majesty of the Himalayas looking down on one's littleness. It does one good. The air is pure and strong. The scenic vastness kills petty conceits. I lodged in a bungalow on the hill slope and from my bedroom window



15 Kinchinjunga from Darjeeling



16 The East Rongbuk Glacier  
HIMALAYAN SCENERY





17 A Wayside Station, Assam



18 A Camel Cart in Northern India



19 Near the Khyber Pass



20 In the Shakir Tangi Gorge

CAMEL CARAVANS ON THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER



21 Darjeeling

watched the glistening robes of Kinchinjunga. To me it was as good as a daily prayer. That mighty mass of naked white rising up to the blue of heaven was like a miracle of holiness; it spoke to me in measureless reproof. But you must see it before the mists rise if you are to view its noblest splendour. The rising sun glimmers on its sides in the sweetest and tenderest of pinkish flames. There are mornings when the gargantuan mountain appears to tremble because of them; cubistic masses of snow throw up exquisite tendrils of shadow which are speedily swallowed up by pale pink lights so delicate that they quiver in the morning freshness.

All round the mountains tower. Tea gardens drape the lower slopes, and, here and there, a white bungalow marks the abode of a lonely planter. Forests fling sombre cloaks far up the hillsides, and all day long you can watch the clouds being born on the expansive heights. To Darjeeling comes the Bengal Government in the hot weather—March to June. Consequently the place is gay when the plains are not. Men of commerce as soon as they get run down by labours in the cities come to Darjeeling for rest and peace. It is a jewel of a place—strewn like a handful of silver on the hills. That is one of its charms as well as one of its disadvantages. It abounds in inclines. You cannot go anywhere without either a pony or rickshaw. The ponies are sophisticated things with an utter contempt for speed; the rickshaws ponderous creations drawn by two men and pushed by three.

But one likes them both. They seem an essential emanation from Darjeeling's uniqueness. There is a club to which officials go, and a racecourse to which everyone goes. The things that run there are not much bigger than fox-terriers, but that need not trouble you. Sport is good and betting brisk. Schools are numerous and so are school sports. Visitors are "cordially invited to attend." I was honoured by being the chief guest at a Girl Guide camp-fire and had to deliver a speech at a moment's notice. I forget what I said; it doesn't very much matter. Speeches in Darjeeling are like inches in

infinitude. But what amazed me was that the girls were ordinary girls who could applaud and laugh at a joke. The ordinary on the lap of the extraordinary! They appeared to be mostly Anglo-Indians of good parentage. These, as I found later, form the bulk of students in Darjeeling. They are sent there to study out of the heat, and I am told that the standard of education is surprisingly high.

One of the things to do in Darjeeling is to see the sun rise on Mount Everest. In order to do this you have to mount a pony or enter a rickshaw at 2 a.m. and set out for an eminence called Tiger Hill. I did this and will never forget the experience. Up there the morning air bites. My companion asked me as I shivered in the elevated gloom if I would like some hot coffee. I certainly would. It went down like nectar. Never did coffee stimulate as that coffee did. My shivers disappeared and the crouching figures around me became Grecian urns of beauty.

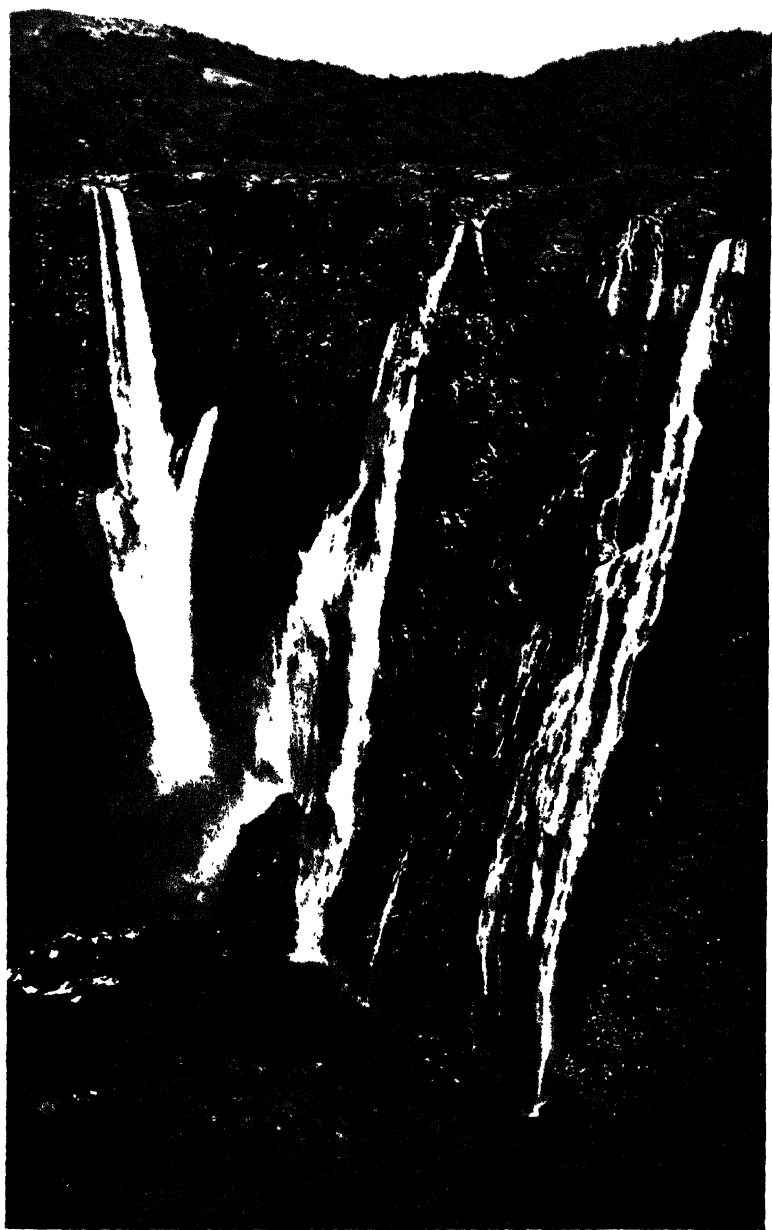
Chained ponies plucked at the grudging grass; frail winds teased the shadowy forest. We seemed isolated in a dark sky; no sign of the sunrise. But I rejoiced; a curious tide of peace had invaded me. I even told a joke.

"There was a cinder in that coffee," said my companion with a sly smile!

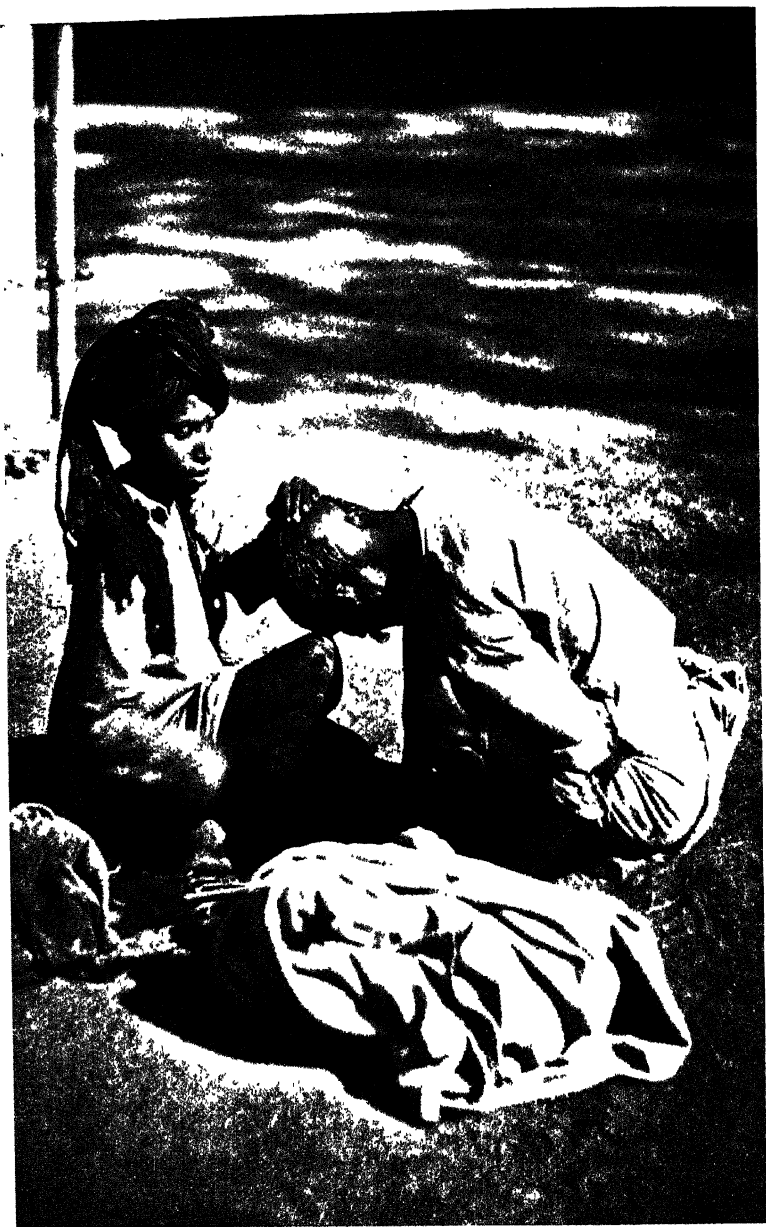
Then came the sun sprinkling the hills with shafts of light. Great splays of radiance rise as its heralds; brighter and brighter grow the mountain masses; lower and lower sink the shadows until finally in a burst of splendour the gigantic pearl-like sun appears.

I looked behind. Mount Everest was like a frail ivory finger far away across leagues of mountain peaks. What a tiny glory it was! It looked about as majestic as a blade of grass. But the rose of sunrise on it was heavenly. So wan and yet so glorious; a jewel lost in a primeval tumult.

That was all. We had seen what the whole world wants to see—a flick of beauty in an age of drabness. The mists rose slowly and took up their appointed places on the



22 The Yersoppa Falls, Mysore



mountain brows; gradually valleys became sweet with light; forests stalked out of the night to be clothed in saffron and gold. A stupendous mystery had rolled from darkness to light.

In a dear old inn at the foot of the hill we ate mountain chicken in silence. Our feelings were too big for the littleness of words.

### *Assam*

Assam has to its credit the tea-growing industry of India. There is tea grown in the district around Darjeeling, but in Assam it is the main industry next, of course, to that of rice. There is some coal in the province, and I have heard of gold-washing being carried on. Assam is drained by the Brahmaputra River, but is covered by large stretches of jungle. The Burmese were fond of harrying the people of Assam. For this purpose they would cross the Assam hills which sweep east from Bengal some 200 miles north of Calcutta. Fierce warriors they were, these old Burmese, and the timid dwellers of Assam were continually afraid of them.

As a province it has little importance apart from its tea and paddy (rice). The area is 55,384 square miles, and it produces 226,000,000 pounds of tea. The capital is Shillong, a quiet, dull township. Hills, jungle and Brahmaputra describes Assam. You can go for miles and see nothing but wild grass or tangled shrubs. I once made the journey by rail from Calcutta to Dibrugarh. It was during Mr. Gandhi's non-co-operation strikes when the tea-garden coolies (recruited from South India) were involved. Dibrugarh is one of the centres of the tea-growing industry there, and I wanted to investigate the position for professional reasons. We got to the Brahmaputra about noon after an all-night journey. Here we were put aboard a river steamer, and, while crossing, had lunch. I enjoyed it. Meals are elaborate in India but they appear to be miraculously so when served in remote, primitive parts of the country. The sun poured down on the broad, silent river; on either side straggles of forest and



jungle; dull, hot hills coloured like old iron; a sky clear of cloud and quivering with heat; the languorous drone of the vessel's engines; turbaned waiters whose black hands were uncomfortable in white gloves. Yet we drank English beer!

River dinghies or sampans hovered about watching the steamer as if it were an incarnation of Brahma. Assam is blessed with the same contempt for time as the rest of India; it hates the vulgarity of doing something.

The river crossed, we entered another train, and, after a remarkably soothing delay, proceeded on our journey. I sat for hours watching jungle; eternal jungle! Empty, rotting, self-warring jungle; trees fallen in old age; dead grass heaped on dead grass in semi-decomposed mounds; queer greenish pools of stagnant water; young trees broken and bent in the struggle for existence; here and there a blossom untidily red like smears of blood; sluggish streams basined in silt; the toon tree with bushy foliage, and the general feeling of Life standing in serene tragedy over Death.

One is continually being shocked in India. But not at anything which is germane to the country; only at the curious indecency of exotic contrast. I was wearied of the jungle, when all of a sudden we passed a small line-side village. It was as dull and fatalistic as its background, and was the colour of mud. Young children gaped at us, stark naked, their tiny pot-bellies thrust out with the candour of innocence. In the middle of a group under a palm-tree sat an old hag, her thin hair as colourless as dead rushes. She stared at us from under long, rugged eyelashes, her bare arms wrinkled and shapeless. A puff of smoke came from her mouth. She was smoking—a cigarette! Here in jungly Assam cigarette smoke rising to the amazed nostrils of Siva!

I remember passing Gauhati. On the south bank of the Brahmaputra, it is said to have been the capital of an old kingdom. It is primitive to the bone. But, of course, you must be prepared for the primitive in India. It has shrines for Hindu and Buddhist, and I was told that there was an

American Baptist mission there. Thus is the struggle of religions like the struggle of the jungle.

Low hills prevailed—low, bare, sun-baked hills. The train moved on. It possessed a delightful leisureliness which was in accord with the district. The man who is impatient in India is not only an enemy to himself but an indifferent friend to circumstance. Our train frequently stopped for no other apparent reason than that it wanted to stop. I didn't blame it. The sun was zenith-high and the louvered carriage was like a baking-oven. The last gingerbeer I had was little cooler than the quivering air. Palm-trees and bamboo clumps; dun villages and staring children; dreamy glimpses of river; the Naga Hills grimly drowsing, and rounded mounds which must have been glacial moraines.

At long last we came to the place where dinner was to be had. I got out with a sense of relief. The sun was setting in huge barbaric splashes; straight rafters of light stretched from tinted hilltop to tinted hilltop. Forest and jungle mingled in a dark lagoon along the valley.

"*Khana munta, sahib?*" asked a uniformed Indian waiter at the refreshment-room door.

"Dinner?" I replied. "Of course I want dinner. Do you think I am to live on jungle?"

He grinned in the charming Hindu fashion. He had perceived that the sahib desired to be facetious, and he rather liked facetious people. He gave me the best table in the low, lamp-lit dining-room. The dinner was good and I enjoyed it. There were only six diners all told, but we made friends as Europeans do in the East. A tea-planter was very useful to me. He told me that the garden coolies thought Mr. Gandhi was a reincarnation of Vishnu, and that unless they obeyed him the Brahmaputra would turn to liquid fire and burn the very rocks over which it ran. He had one eye like an egg on toast, and his chin was as the blade of an oar for shape. I liked the great yellow fatness of his hands. Genial and honest if a little immersed in tea and coolies, he made an

excellent companion. We talked until long after the last coffee had been swallowed.

"When does the train go?" I suddenly asked. The station had grown abnormally quiet.

"Dunno," he muttered, his yellow hand coaxing a match to light his pipe.

I went out to investigate. The station was moveless and voiceless. The train was still there, but it seemed abandoned. One oil-lamp glimmered. I walked towards it. In the engine I noticed two acutely angled knees. They were those of the engine-driver fast asleep. A little steam oozed from his engine somewhere, but it too was snoozing. I walked on. On a long bare seat was a prostrate human form. I peered at it; it was the guard. After a considerable shaking he woke up with startled alacrity.

"When does your train start?" I asked.

"Any time, sir. We are waiting for you."

The patient East! If the yellow-handed tea-planter and I had chosen to sit in the dining-room until sunrise next day the train would have waited!

At Dibrugarh I entered into glory. The Assam Valley Light Horse were in camp, and thus had I compressed within a few yards all the tea-planters of the district. They gave me a special tent and fed me like a visiting general. What a gathering of Christians they were! Many of them had not seen a white man for months. Most of the jungle-encompassed tea-gardens have but an indifferent connection with the civilised world, as roads are but ridges of clay in the monsoon season. Polo, bridge and inordinate drinking are the diversions of the average tea-planter. He rides ten or twenty miles once a month to a club and comes back to a lonely bungalow and an eternal tennis shirt. Under him as subjects of an absolute monarch are men, women and children employed on the garden. They depend on him for food, housing and justice. If one man's wife has been stolen by another the aggrieved husband comes to the planter for redress. In sickness

he is physician and friend. Even burials are not without his province, while the birth of twins has to be hallowed by his knowledge if not by his actual presence. Thus is the planter a man endowed with much unofficial prerogative, and my observation confirmed my belief that he exercises it with humanity and judgment. He may drink a bottle a day, but whisky as a medicine against loneliness is not infrequently associated with a sound if pioneering common sense.

The Brahmaputra was a wide gulf of bleaching stones. Down the middle ran a silent serpent of water. It was the height of the dry season and the river was at its lowest. I was told that when the rains come in June it lips both banks and frequently spills over. On its right bank, far off, glistened snow-powdered mountains. The old natives of Assam used to worship these mountains. To them were attributed all sorts of powers and plagues. If the jungle took fire and burned up a few villages and their crops the smite of the mountains was traced. Should the river remain small in monsoon storms men turned faces of imploring distress to them, and when cholera and smallpox sent strangling fingers across the land, prayers and devil-dances were organised to make the mountains relent.

Half Assam seems to be waiting the hand of the cultivator. It is but sparsely populated and indifferently cultivated. Since the whole of India is but half developed, however, why concentrate on Assam?

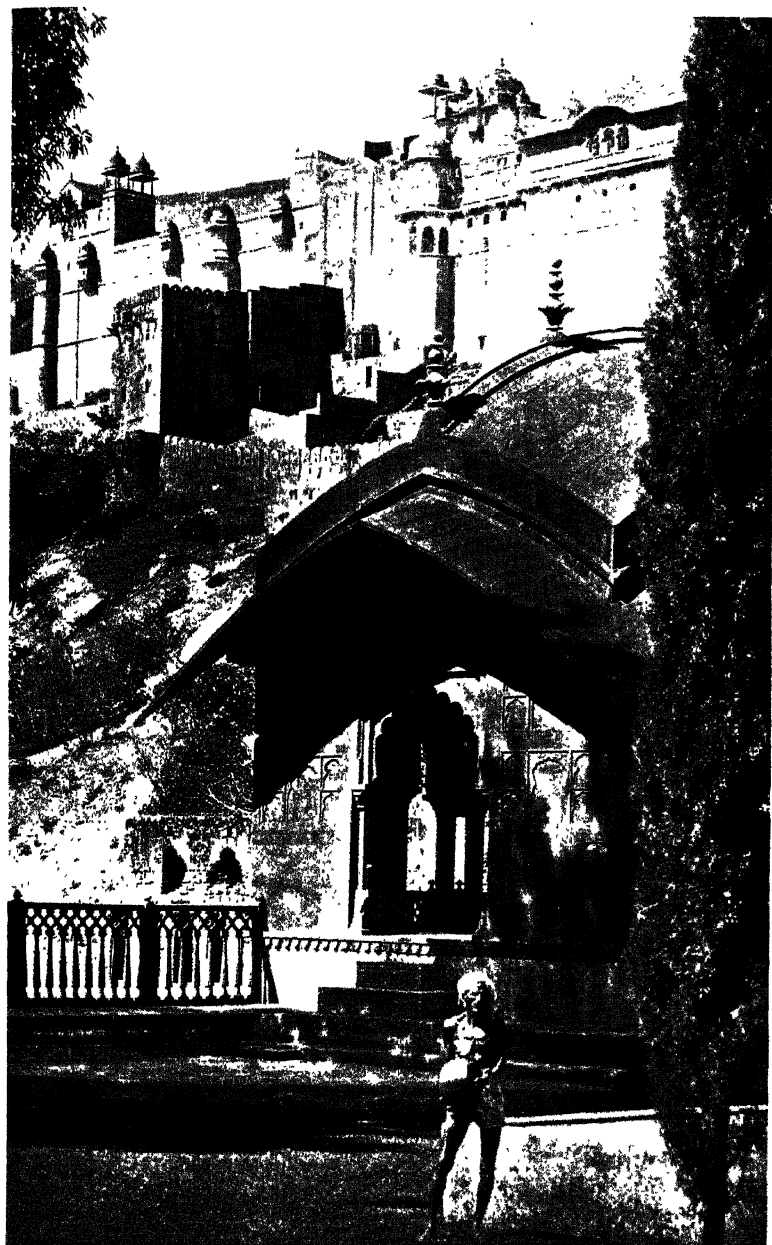
Dibrugarh is built on the flat land along the river bank. It has the scattered disorderliness of most Indian townships with an abundance of shading trees. One gets the impression that land is cheap; bungalows are spacious, with wild unkempt compounds; walls crumble and roads are dusty. There is a church and a holy Eastern silence.

### *North India*

In some respects the Punjab is India's most precious inheritance. It has seen centuries of invading effort from as early as 2,000 B.C. Its principal river is the Indus. Between

the Indus and the Jumna there are no less than five rivers, and it is this circumstance which has given the province its name, for "Punjab" is derived from Hindustani for "five rivers." The Jhelam runs south-east, the Chenab comes from Kashmir; the Ravi joins the Chenab after a course of 460 miles; the Beas is the smallest; the Sutlej is the fifth.

If one were to travel from one end of India to the other one would find roughly that the north around the Punjab Province would be dry and desert-like while in Bengal and Bombay the land would be more or less flat, fertile and nearly always flooded in the rains. South around Madras there would be conditions varying between the uncomfortably dry and the dangerously flooded. The most marked difference, however, is in the nature of the village architecture and the spirit of the people. I once made the journey from Calcutta to Delhi and from there down to Bombay. It was early in the monsoon season, and I noted carefully the changes in the condition of land and people. As I passed through Bengal the green, fertile land stretched from horizon to horizon. Leagues and leagues of paddy-fields were diversified by clumps of bamboo and long irregular strings of palms. Clouds lay low and darkly bellying; everything was dank and luxuriant. Grass sprouted everywhere; from the pantiled roofs of buildings, the crannies of old walls, the cracks in concrete paths, the chimneys of factories, over the rails of side-lines, and on decaying patches of fallen trees. The young rice was a mild lush green. Water lay in sullen sheets; all things were green and soaking, and every half-hour or so the clouds sent down long whippings of grey rain further to drench a drowning landscape. Villages cowered from rain and wind on low, bamboo-covered hillocks, and cultivators waded knee-deep in mud and water. I noted particularly the Bengali village hut. It has a curiously bent thatched roof as if somebody had pulled it down at each corner, leaving the middle as a rounded hump. Its framework is bamboo poles and the walls a combination of matting and mud.



29 Amber Castle, Northern India



30 ALLAHABAD

A picturesquely dressed bridegroom.

Scenically there was nothing to describe; only a series of flooded creeks or rivers and the eternal waterlogged, tree-embroidered greenness. Nothing seemed to move excepting the lashing rain and tumbling floods. When you saw a man he generally wore a futile sack on his head and walked in a creeping manner, like a bedraggled insect.

I was glad when as the dank day faded into the dank night we came to Asanol. Here fires flared in devilish red tongues into the sky. Here is the chief coal-bearing area in India, and this ugly but necessary industry disfigures the land and embellishes the night for miles around. I caught glimpses of bronze human muscles straining in the wild light as I sat at dinner. A Chablis had made me imaginative. Why this Vulcan-like industry as I sat idly feeding my gross body—lithe young Bengalis straining at the forge of industry that fat men should build neat bungalows on Wimbledon Common? No, with *le fromage* came the realisation that these men are adding to their standard of living and thus forming the first rung in civilisation's ladder. Life is poor, even in Bengal, and the cultivator and his sons are glad of the Asansol coalfields to make it richer.

A long dark night and a rumbling train brought me to a new world. The rain and waterlogged landscape had gone. Sunlight streamed into the carriage with a vicious gladness; it seemed ready to devour with joy. I pulled up the louvre and looked out. The new world extended beyond climatic conditions. The land was no longer green and flat and tree-embroidered. It had large creamy patches and the crumbs of mountains lay about. I saw no water, no cloud and no rain. Fields were dusty and parched.

Then, with a flourish of brakes the train crawled into Allahabad. The city suited my new world so well that I was startled. It had no rain-soaked houses with grass sprouting from roofs and walls. It reminded me of pictures I had seen of Jerusalem. Its spirit was of the desert. Stark, clear outlines with high white walls built against the sun; gardens



smothered in sand, and tree and shrub rising in olive-green hardihood; houses square and boxlike with invisible roofs; empty chalk-coloured streets and the limbs of a dry, parched land all around.

It was early morning. My desert city was just awaking. But no smoke rose from its square pale houses. Fires were shunned here. Fires burned, and the country was already burned. What my new world needed was water. It was desperately athirst. Oh, that the rain would come! That clouds would cover the sun and that the long rich swathes of the monsoon showers would revive a tired and bloodless land!

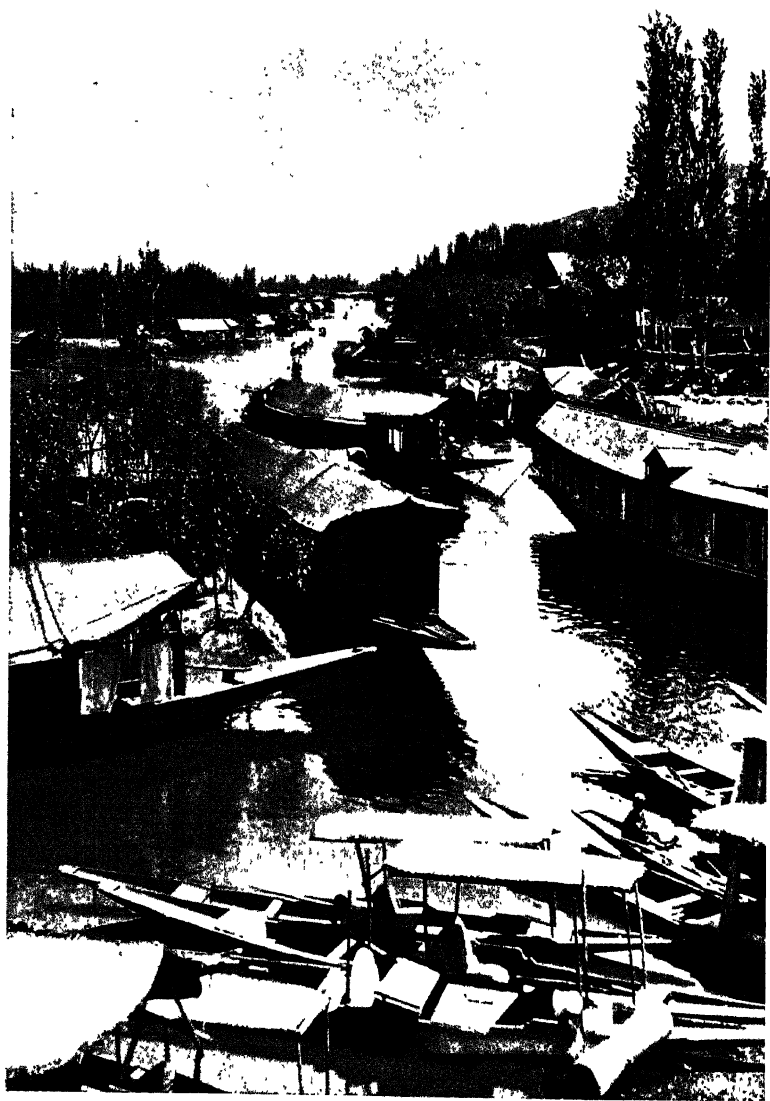
But the contrast with Bengal stretched even further. The Bengalis are Hindus; here I could scent the Mohammedan air. Allahabad is not only the capital of the United Provinces. It is still the centre of much Mohammedan life, and when Akbar ruled in Hindustan he favoured Allahabad most graciously. Here was built the first university of the Indian provinces, and here a dire struggle was witnessed during the Mutiny. It was easy to see that Islam was well established. A mosque gleamed at me in a bulbous dome and high pointed arches; a lone figure on the white street wore the loose robe of the Arabian worshippers of Allah. But even when I discovered a Hindu temple it was not a Bengali Hindu temple. It had a long clustering spire instead of the characteristic Bengali arched gable. When we moved on and gave Cawnpore a call I observed that even the station buildings were Islamic in spirit. They had pointed arches to door and window, and the fez cap of the Mohammedan was general.

The villages, too, were different. They suggested frontier conditions rather than the green alluvial richness of Bengal. They were composed of square huts with whitewashed mud walls and flat roofs. A curious indefiniteness surrounded them. They suggested an enveloping wall as if for defence, and were generally built on rising ground like tiny fortresses. I had the good fortune to examine one and found the internal arrangement mazelike as if to confuse an invader. Their

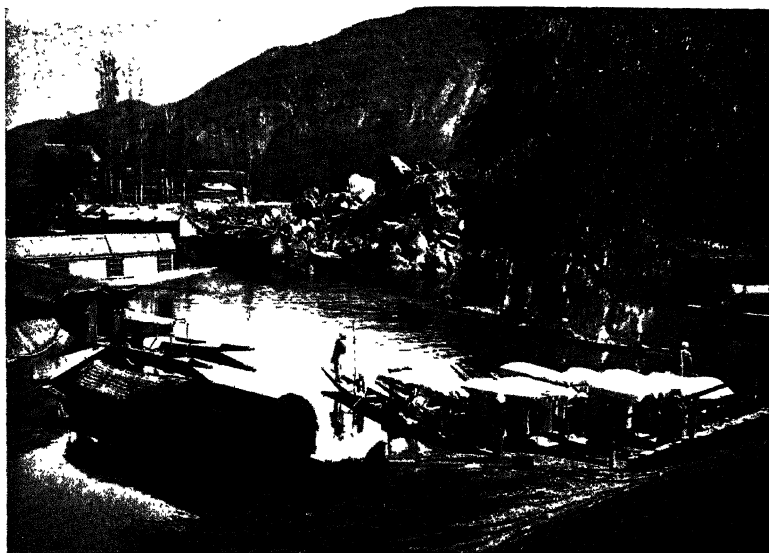


31 KASHMIR

A hill monastery in the Liddar Valley



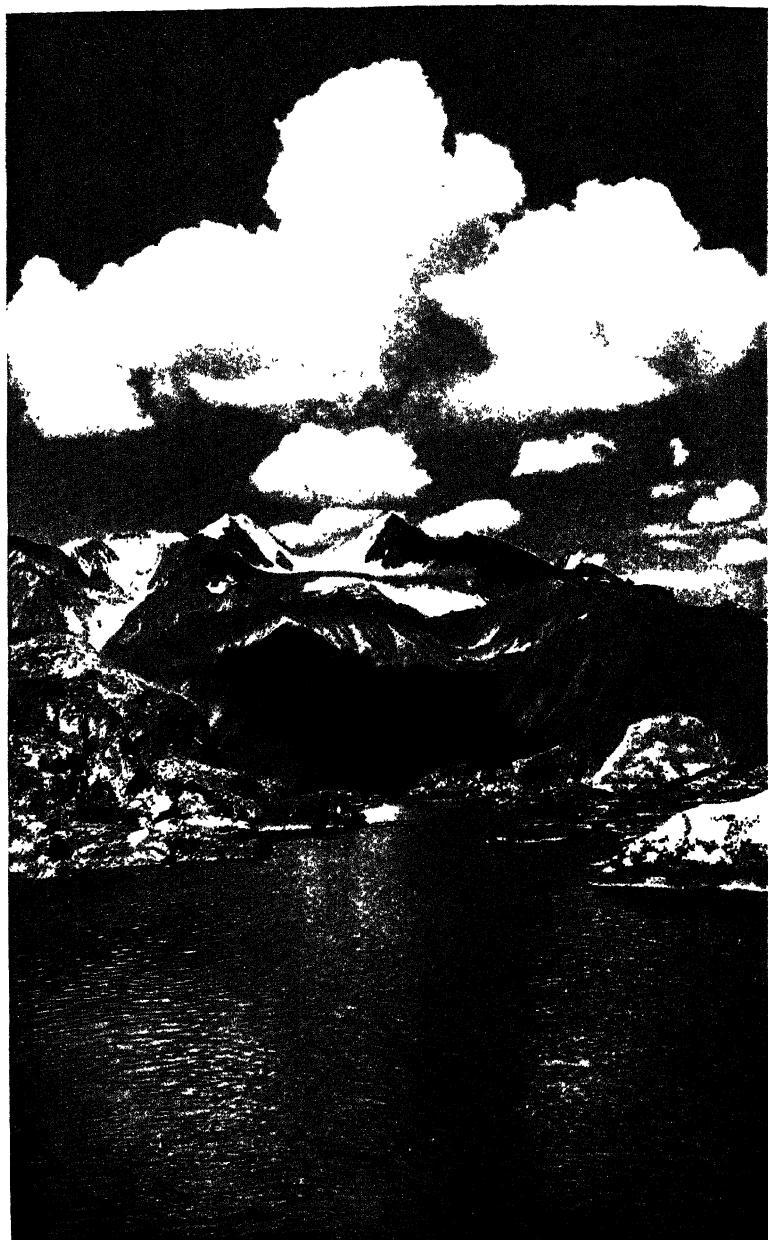
32 Houseboats on a river near Srinagar



33 Floating Homes



34 The Nishat Water Gardens  
IN KASHMIR



35 Nilanag Pool, near Kolahoi, Kashmir

roofing is crude and consists of a series of bamboo poles lying horizontally on the walls and supporting anything from a layer of brushwood to sheets of corrugated iron. Sometimes the poles are inserted in holes near the top of the walls, but nearly always protrude and thus give a slovenly and unfinished appearance to the huts. A North Indian village, indeed, is always slovenly in appearance. It has fewer trees and less disposition to snuggle than the Bengali one. The Bengali village cowers; the North Indian village glares; the one hides from its enemies, the other defies them. And this comes very near to describing the character of the two peoples. Bengal was never a military province; the Punjab and its neighbours always were. The Punjab loves to fight better than to work; the Bengali adores intellect and ignores physical fitness.

We do not look for much industry in the north. The Punjab produces rock salt, slate, plumbago and sulphur, while iron, antimony and lead are found near Simla and in Kashmir. The Punjab's rainfall is only thirty inches, less than half that of Bengal. It grows wheat, barley, grain, maize, sugar cane, etc. Great tracts are barren, and there is a continual struggle against the desert.

In the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh we have much the same physical conditions prevailing. At Cawnpore there is considerable industrial enterprise comprising cotton and wool mills, tanneries, etc.; but the meagre rainfall is a sore veto on cultivation. Sand and the cactus shrub are enemies who never sleep. Against them North India wars valorously, but the human will is short-lived and variable. Nature's tactics are to wait, and she does so with implacable cruelty in North India.

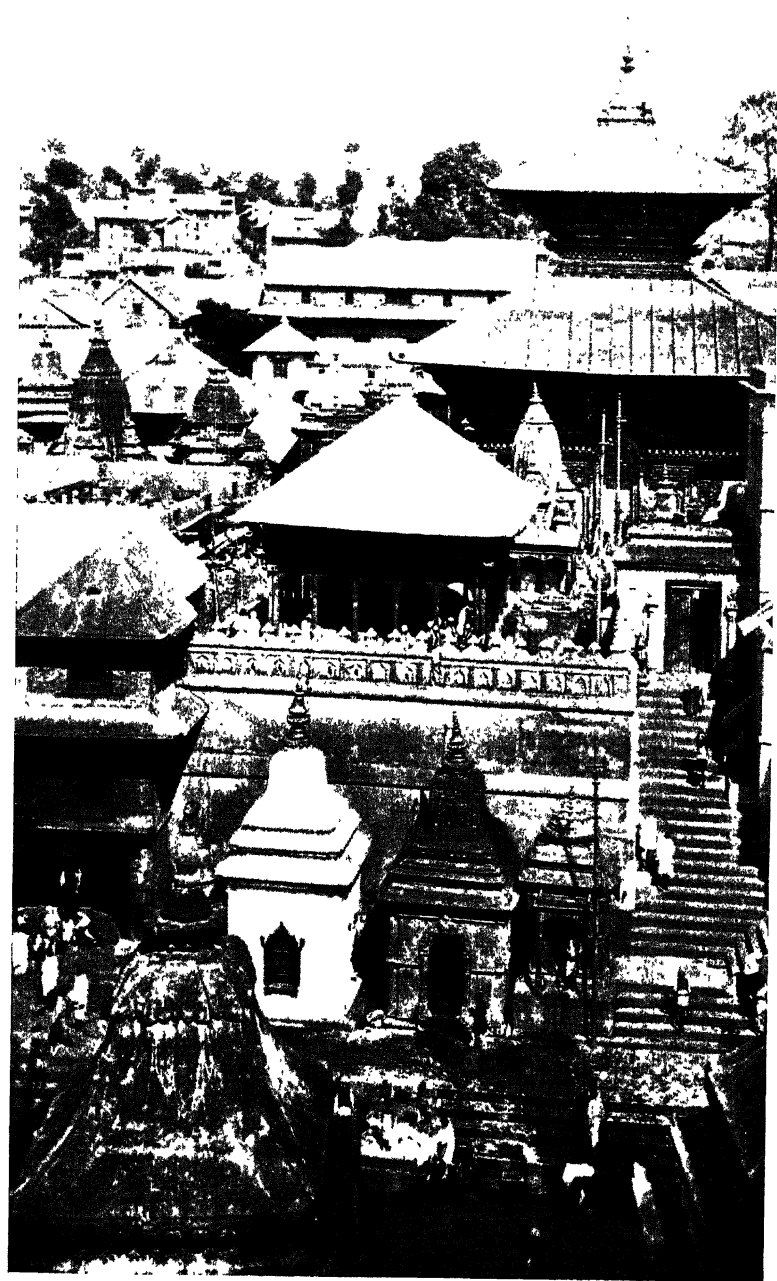
In Kashmir we have an Indian paradise. Climate, scenery and sporting facilities come near to the European ideal, and the number who visit it increases every year. Its hills are glorious, bold, dramatic and arresting. Not far off is Nanga Parbat rising to 26,182 feet above sea level. It has a glacier

on the eastern slope which fascinates many visitors. Unpleasant restrictions used to deter those with a love of beauty from going to Kashmir. Now, however, many of these have been removed, and a train journey to Rawalpindi followed by a drive to Srinagar are amply rewarded. It is the custom to go to the hill station of Gulmarg when the weather heats up in June. Sportsmen find in Kashmir ibex, markhor, Kashmir stag, orrial and black bears, and those who like splendidly to dream on a river boat experience there a rapture compounded of grand mountains and tender valleys. Here the desert is at rest, and life is given over to peace and a luxurious ease. Kashmir comes near to the Hindu vision of a motionless bliss. Practical considerations have been soothed; the world's queer pains are quenched in a caressing gentleness.

No traveller to Kashmir should miss climbing Takht-i-Suleman (Solomon's seat or throne) a hill which seems as if specially created for furnishing a view. Here he will be over 1,000 feet above one of the most beautiful valleys in the world. He will see a circle of mountains whose ivory crests suggest a titanic sea and whose tawny flanks frequently quiver with the sweetest gradations of light and colour. If he is bold enough he will see the ivory crests turn blood-red at sunset and the tawny flanks sink gradually from a tender blue or a coppery gold to a hazy lavender; later, they will be but vague shapes in curiously trembling shadows. He will also see the silver worm of the Jhelum winding along an enchanted land whose numerous lakes are like the jewels of prodigious gods. Villages perch and snuggle; silken threads of smoke rise occasionally; dark cedars contrast with the ilex and the birch to form an exquisite natural carpet; gardens bloom faintly in rhododendron and magnolia, and over all will be the sure, strong calm of the god-guarded Himalayas.

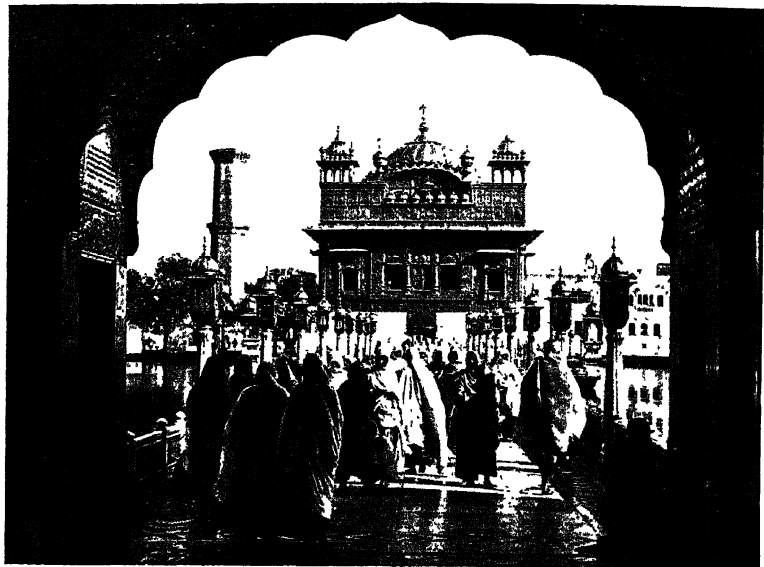
### *Down to Bombay*

Having glanced at the conditions in the extreme north I continued my journey to Bombay. The first half was hot and



36 The Golden Temple and Bathing Ghats of Pashupati, Nepal





37 The Golden Temple, Amritsar



38 Water Carriers in Northern India

sandy with strangely desolate ruins rising here and there as witnesses to a crumbled civilisation. At times they resembled great sandstone outcrops in the ferocity of their outline; at others they were as calmly resigned as an old English abbey. Dull red rocks and scraggy reaches of uncultivated land were common, but occasionally a tired figure behind a couple of bullocks was doing something to a field. There are no fences in India as we know them in England. In most cases divisions of land are marked by low mud walls. As a matter of fact, your North Indian is exceedingly fond of mud walls. He builds them on the slimmest excuse. Not only does he construct them in a vague way about his village, but he sees to it that they enclose any patch of ground which he considers should be used for a special purpose. Temples and mosques very often have half-completed walls around them, and it rather amused me to see bamboo clumps and old misshapen trees sanctified by the same means. It was evident that anybody who was not a rheumatic cripple could scale these walls with the greatest of ease, while I could have no respect for the animal, wild or tame, which could not breach them in a couple of minutes.

Paddy-fields in the north are sometimes divided as in Bengal and South India, by low demarcations of mud only three or four inches high. But frequently they are barely recognisable from the sand and scrub of the ordinary landscape. Paddy, indeed, is not always suitable to northern conditions. It needs water, and the north has little to give it. Sugar and maize and dhal are more favoured crops.

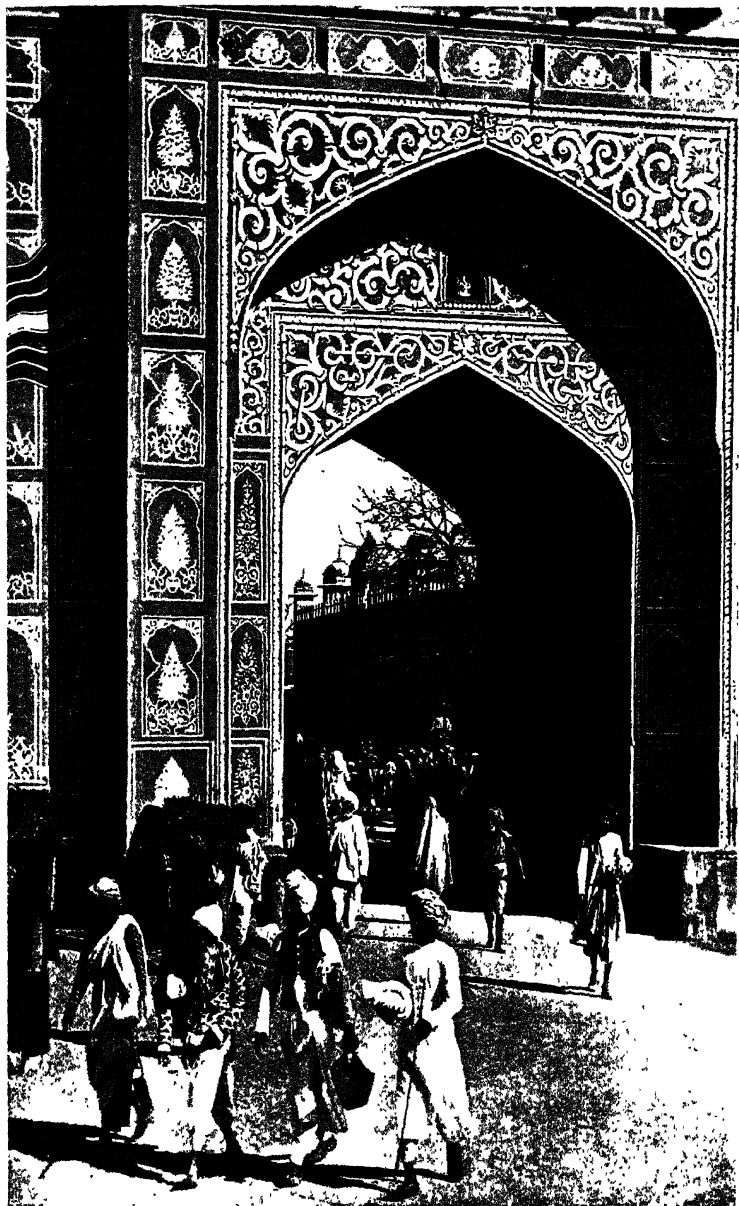
Soon we strike low scrubby hills a few hours' journey south-west of Delhi. In the midst of them we had lunch. I was particularly interested in the nature of the villages. They were now not frontier-like in design. The white walls and flat, untidy roofs had disappeared. Defence was not now the main consideration. But what a degeneration in structure! The huts were little more than low walls on the top of which were piled masses of dead branches and jungle twigs. They

were also lower and meaner and less secure. The people who inhabited them cannot be far above the nomads who dwell in the hills because their neighbours object to their wandering in the plains. It struck me, indeed, that this hill region was occupied by descendants of the aboriginal people of India prior to the Aryan invasion.

Along the railway side there is, of course, a thin vein of civilisation, and when we came to a station of any importance crowds of villagers came to look at us. Many of them were Islamic in bearing, and I remembered that the Sind district, on whose borders we were, was known as a seat of adulterated Mohammedanism. They looked at us in the most candid way. All Indian crowds are, in fact, candid. They are never ashamed either of their stare or their curiosity. A trainful of people is to them a phenomenon, and a phenomenon is a thing to be curious about. They have not the Western guile which induces us to dress our natural inclinations in an exquisite convention. They look until they are tired looking and then, with a yawn as frank as their stare, turn to more exciting things.

An Indian never sits. He always squats. Probably this is because he usually has nothing to sit on, but he never seems to tire of this squatting posture. Practically everything in life that is worth doing to an Indian is done while squatting. A squatting barber shaves his squatting customer; a station official dreamily waiting the arrival of a train squats until the disturbing event comes to pass; a woman selling trinkets squats until the gods bring her a customer; a cultivator consuming his evening meal has no other attitude in which to address himself to an engaging task; the man who waits on you at table squats outside the room until you have finished your prawn curry.

During the night we threaded our way through hill and valley, some of which showed slaty formations, until early in the morning I woke to a weeping world. Gone were the dry, arid plains, gone the naked sun and tired figures on hot



39 JAIPUR  
A richly decorated Mogul Gate



40 MOUNT ABU  
Naki Talis Lake, Rajputana

fields. I looked out on a land dismally soaked. We were in the monsoon again. But not the Bengali monsoon. Certainly the water was knee-deep on the paddy-fields and the low green bamboo-fringed plains were there as in the east, but the Bengali hut was not. Its place had been taken by a neater, sturdier, more businesslike but less distinguished erection. Its design was organised utility. Four poles, four walls and a steep pointed roof—just like a woodman's hut on the Canadian Rockies, only smaller and frailer. Many of them had mud walls but some had bare bamboo matting for wall as well as for roof. They lacked the picturesqueness of the Bengali huts and the martial vigilance of the northern. The villages did seek the shelter of palm and bamboo, but they did not cower. They had a stark independence; they were sure of themselves and had little fear. I felt also that they had little reverence, and a village without reverence is like a temple without a god. Thus, I came to Bombay feeling that she was not quite so seemly as Bengal and far from being as watchful as the Punjab.

### *South India*

Between Central India and South India there is more than the Vindhya Mountains. There is also the spirit of a race. We must not forget that in Southern India the Dravidian civilisation has still an influence. The temple of Bengal has little architectural affinity with the temple of Madras. The one is meek, chaste and refined; the other bold, rich, barbaric. A Dravidian temple flames in defiance and covers itself wondrously with carved figures. The Bengali temple is more concerned with the deep, sullen strength of the forces behind nature. It tries to placate rather than to defy. Such a divergence of outlook would be dangerous to national unity were it not for the binding firmament of Hinduism. Without Hinduism India will cease being a cement and begin being a bewildered mass of accretions.

My experience of Madras and South India people lies

pleasantly on my memory. They have a reverence for caste which the northerner lacks, but they have a great deal of slightly unpolished geniality as well. There is a wild strain in them, but it is not the wildness of national ferocity. A purer-motivated people it would be difficult to find. In the Southern temperament is a tang which it is almost impossible to describe. If the traveller journeys from the south of France to its northern limits he will experience something of the difference which I am endeavouring to establish. Bengal is smooth, sleek and gracious. Madras has a rough skin to its handshake. Its kindness is of a rougher texture, but none the less durable.

And I always think that the physical features of the region are closely allied to the temperament of the people. There is a broad strip of good cultivation along the eastern shoreline. Here the rice-grower is happy. Rivers wash down from the Eastern Ghats giving drainage and fertility to the soil. The cultivator's implements are heavier and rougher, however, than in Bengal. And he is less nimble and more rigid. There is an austerity about him and his environment which is absent farther north. The Bengali fields are fat and deep-soiled. They have great reserves of clay and silt; their limbs are sumptuously upholstered. In the south the grain of the soil is coarser and less kindly. It demands a harsher tillage and a stronger plough. Behind it is not a million years of fertile sedimentation.

And when one explores the Eastern Ghats one finds evidences of great natural cruelty. Volcanic ash tells of mountain vomitings that must have obscured the sun and poisoned the air for hundreds of miles. The hills are gaunt and sharp-edged. Their wind sculpture is shallow and bitter. Tufted grasses wave on desolate spaces, and even when you stoop to pluck a flower its hemp-like stem has a resentful strength. In from the Bay of Bengal come banks of souring mist which coil like constricting snakes around peak and ravine. When the monsoon breaks the rivers carry more grit

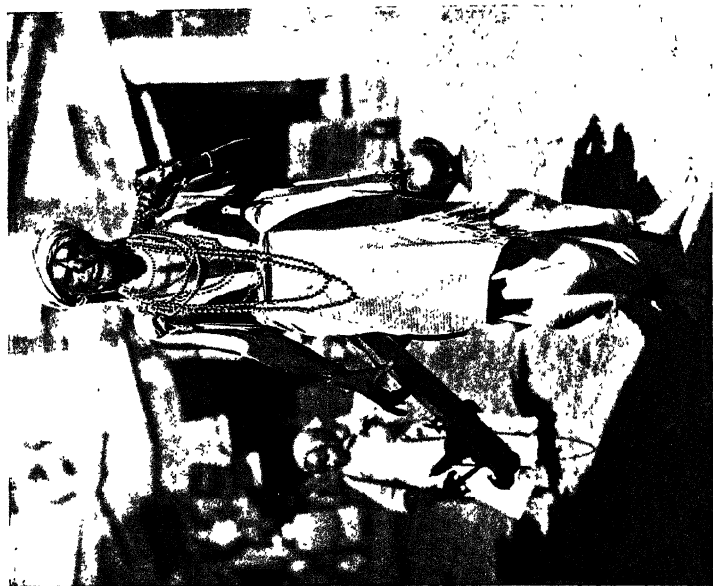


41 GWALIOR  
A Royal Marriage Procession

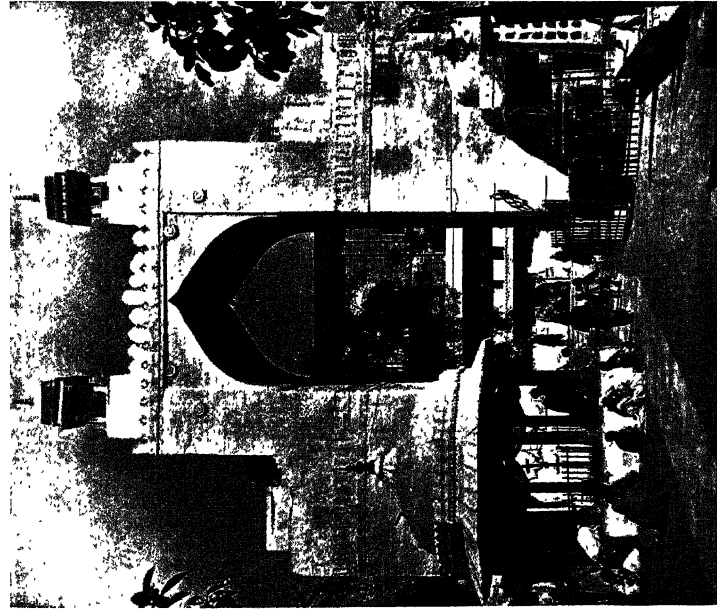




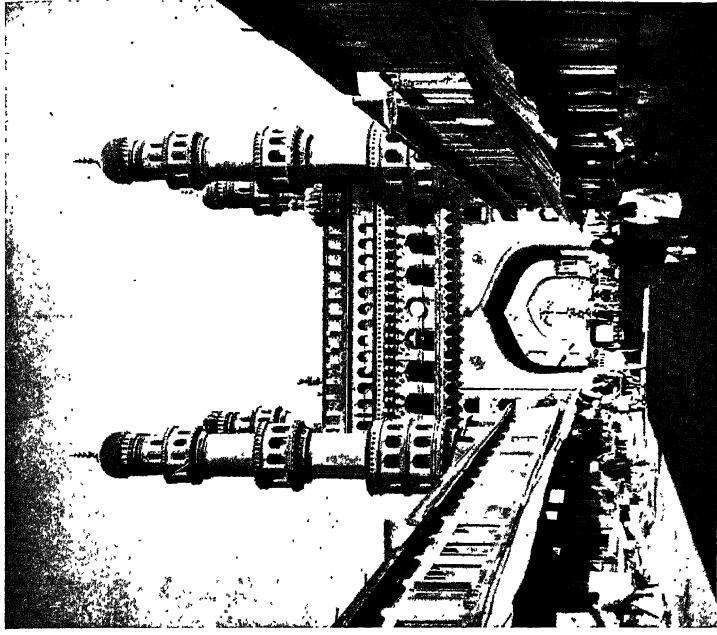
42 A Dancing Troupe, Amritsar



43 A Street Singer, Bangalore



44 Ajmer: Mohammedan Sanctuary



45 Hyderabad: Mohammedan Gateway



46 Alwar: A Street Scene

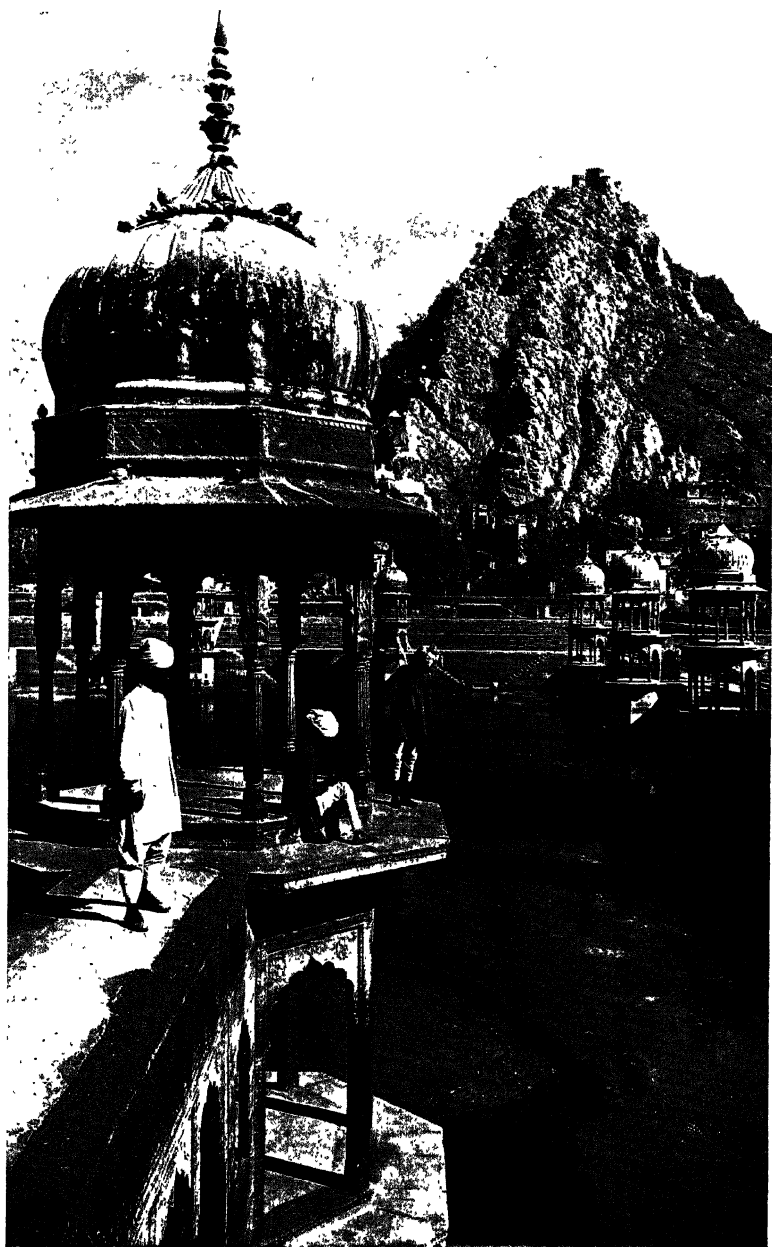
than silt to the sea, and furious cyclones hit the coast with a rage that knows no mercy. Naked suns bite and burn in the warm weather, and, up in the glaring hills and crumbling corries, rocks become so hot as to singe the finger. Laterite, dull red in colour, renders paths sharp and difficult, while deep in the forests many plants have claws of steel.

Historically the difference deepens. It is not at all clear that there are many pure Aryans in South India. Racially, India seems to be a series of imperfect absorptions. The Aryans found the Dravidians and the Dravidians found an unknown race who apparently built up no mean civilisation. Where these pre-Dravidians came from and what existed in India before their appearance is at the moment beyond human research. But it appears quite certain that the Dravidians were largely absorbed by the earlier aborigines, and that the Aryans were widely polluted by the Dravidians. The Aryan invasion may be likened to a great river entering the sea. At first it is strong and resistant. Salt water has no effect on it. But gradually its flow weakens, silt is increasingly deposited and finally the noble, independent river is part of the salty, restless ocean. The Aryan invasion possibly reached Bengal, but did not cross the Vindhya Mountains. It may have sent out creeks along the Western and Eastern Ghats, but they became weakened by intermarriage. Thus did Dravidian racial characteristics remain impregnable. It is true that they had previously suffered impurities by admixture with the aboriginal tribes, but the influence of the Aryan on South India has been largely confined to the wonderful Hindu religion and its attendant social organisation.

The central plateau of South, or Deccan, India rises to an elevation of from 1,000 to 3,000 feet. It is spacious, remote, and at times quite weird. In the higher mountains dwell many of India's mystery people—the pre-Dravidian tribes. Their very names suggest primevality, viz. Santhals, Gonds, Khassias, etc. They are strange, shy people, to whom the tribal law is sacred. They have no caste, only the government

of the tribe. Their dwellings are crude structures made of bamboo and wattle snuggling into the hills. Without his hills, indeed, the aborigine is a poor, lost creature. He hunts and fishes for his food, and cannot understand the degeneracy of those who cultivate fat lands or live in great cities. He lives so close to nature that nature is his god. For him Hinduism is a wearying maze of ununderstandability. He reveres the simple forces of nature and believes that a waterfall that can eat away a limestone rock or displace a chunk of ancient sandstone is more immediately worshipful than the abstract creative force of Brahma. If he can grow a basketful or so of rice on his ledging hills that is all he asks of his god. Of wild beasts he is not afraid; he can spear them with a gladiator's skill; the wiles of mountain-stream fish cannot deceive him; he knows the ways of storms and the sad, pensive soul of the upland jungle. When rain falls and the roaring thunder chariots across the sky, he digs channels so that his rice may be watered and his vegetables nourished. But the weakness of men for abstracting nature and etherealising God has his completest contempt. He runs from it as he would from a falling mountain or a smiting meteorite. He loves the forest and the moor and the lonely hills. For them he would brave the wildest horde that ever carried spear. But worldly ambition and all the filth and grubbiness of material success are to him the deepest and most incomprehensible savagery.

Government officials visit him. That is the curse of a world that maintains a barbaric love of civilisation. And so he has to pay taxes. They are light it is true, but to him they are problems as red as the eyes of malaria. They even force him to work. Thus does he take a ritualistic farewell of his tribal chief and descends to the pestiferous plains where he sells his services as a tea-garden worker. The ships of the Barbarian carry him to the far land of Assam and there he lives with his kin like an Israelite in Babylon under the firm justice of a European planter until such time as he has enough to keep tax-gatherers sweet until the end of his days.





48 Elephants in Durbar Parade

If there is a spot on earth that is fashioned after heaven it is the Nilgiri Hills. Situated in the south-west corner of the triangle made by the Eastern and Western Ghats and the Vindhya Mountains they draw visitors from all parts of the country. On them is situated Ootacamund (or Ooty, as it is familiarly termed), the summer capital of Madras. The Nilgiris are not dramatic like the mountains around Kashmir. They delight rather than awe. Soft, rounded contours and gently dipping valleys; gracious silences and deep, solemn forests; light, slow-moving shadows like the messengers of a Dravidian god; sunset blushes in dusky crimson, thin tremulous blues and the tenderest of flitting emeralds—such are my impressions of the Nilgiris. I did not ascend to their highest reaches. There, I understand, may be found a grander and stouter beauty. I was content with my Nilgiris as pensive and lovely as an autumn afternoon; sweet, wholesome, engentling Nilgiris whose very breath is peace.



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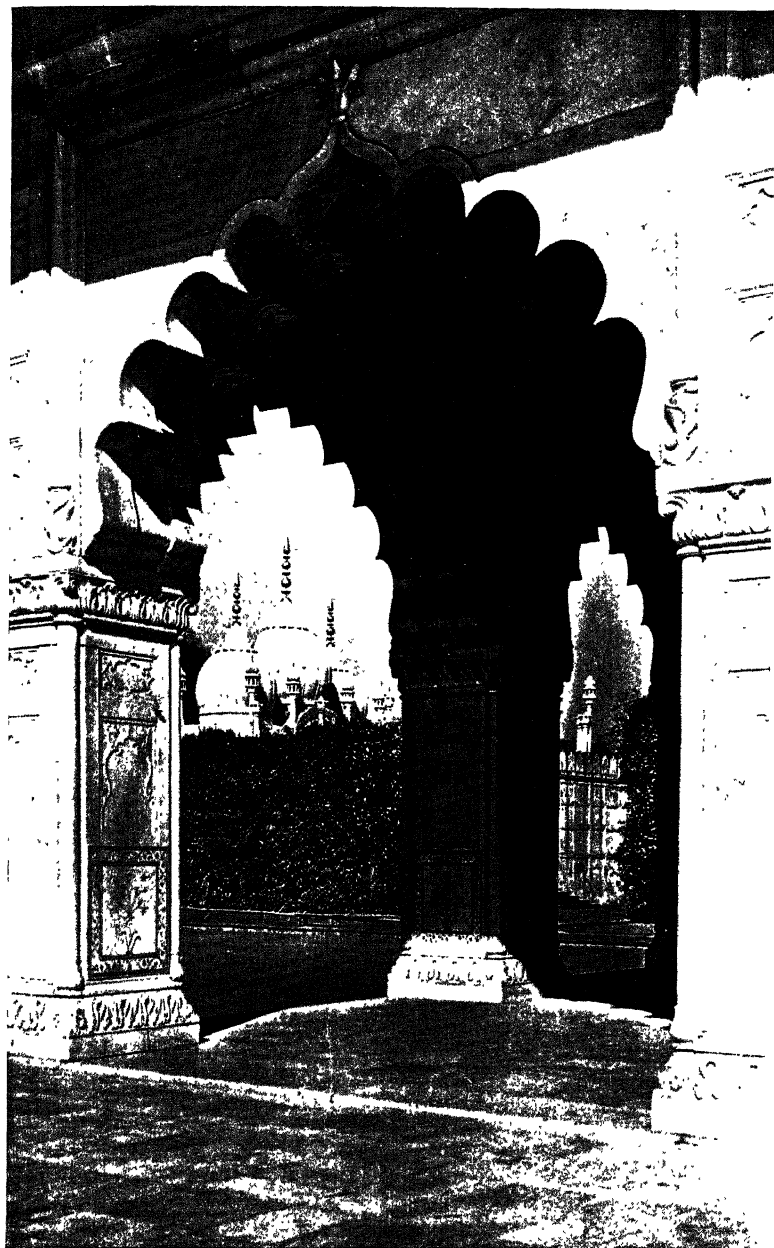
CHAPTER IV  
SOME CITIES OF INDIA

*Delhi*

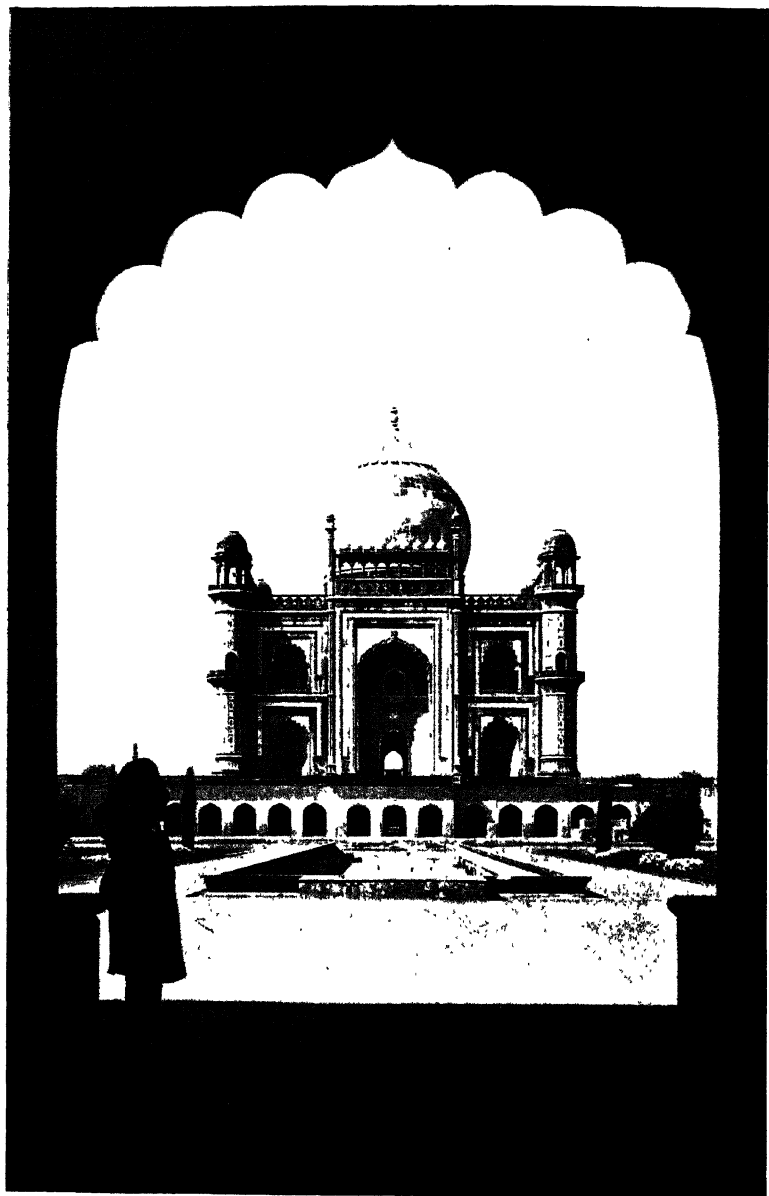
I MAKE no apology for putting Delhi first among Indian cities; it is saturated with Indian history. Hardly a stone of its old red buildings has not seen the colourful drama of human events which makes the city so constantly magnetic. Here it was that kingdoms rose and waned. Delhi has been sacked and resacked; it has been beflagged by the victor and broken by the vanquished; it has seen the blood and tears of human life as well as the richest outpourings of prosperity and splendour.

It is a Mogul city. Hindu influences it has, but they are under the skin so to speak. Her architectural pride is Mogul, and so is her art, her culture, her spirit. It was in Delhi that the Hindu breathed into the warlike ear of Zaher-ud-din Muhammad his fearful confession of defeat; it was in Delhi that Shah Jehan sat upon his glittering peacock throne the richest and most secure monarch in all the world; it was in Delhi that the last Mogul emperor, a poor, old, trembling creature, implored a British subaltern for mercy in 1857. If India ever turns from being a land of religious turmoil she must sing of her Delhi. This pensive old city could support an Indian Iliad. She is as rich in heroism as any Troy; the raw material of epics lies in grass-grown piles on every yard of her battle-scarred soil.

There have been more Delhis than one; there have been no less than seven; and now the hand of democracy has built an eighth. The eighth is like an ideal home beside the Appian Way. It is neat, new, geometrical and beautiful. As a statement in official architecture it is perfect. It has no fussiness, and the encroachments of utility are kept at arm's length; the



49 The Pearl Mosque, Delhi



50 DELHI

The Tomb of Safdar Jang, a Mohammedan Prince

vulgarity of space economy has no disagreeable effects; the designer's hand has been free and sweeping; council chamber, secretariat and viceregal residence are all noble and white and splendid. New Delhi, indeed, has everything but an atmosphere. It has as much individuality as a sculptor's showroom; its spirit is that of a new chair in a new room of a new house. Its pose is correct; the position is correct; its style is correct; its layout is correct. It is, indeed, too infernally correct. It has not seen life, and the only kind of life that is likely to come to it is a ready-made, artificial kind of life—the life of the yellow file and the brass hat.

Perhaps New Delhi will change. If she would only grow a few wrinkles one would have more hope for her. But unless she does change she is doomed to remain an official paradise and never to reach the status of a city. No wonder Old Delhi smiles benevolently beside her. The young stripling just down from Oxford prating of Kant to the man who has read Aristotle for fifty years. Personally, I cannot bear the new Delhi; not while the old one is but a few miles distant. I saw India's official capital on a calm, hot day. It was like a symmetrical bleaching-green. Everything was in white design. The trees were but the grassy interstices. Flat as a table napkin on the village green it nauseated from sheer lack of character. And yet I had to admit its beauty. Sir Edwin Lutyens must have gloried in his task; he has drawn a pattern on sun-baked Indian soil that would have gladdened the heart of an Ingres or made a royal lacemaker leap six feet of aesthetics. His work is a masterpiece. What is there, however, about an iceberg that repels? Surely it is its deadness; its lifelessness; the fact that it has no heart. New Delhi has no heart; all it has is an official brain.

Old Delhi is so full of heart that she weeps inwardly. She weeps over human frailty, human nobility. For what is she but a record of both? Walk into the Diwan-i-Khas (private audience hall of the Emperors) and see its exquisite and lavish beauty. Picture here the colour and bravery of an

empire that stretched from the Ganges valley to the confines of Persia; the roof glittering in a myriad facets; a throne gleaming with jewels, dresses heavy with precious stones, the air romantic with refined scents; an Emperor receiving the reverence of a vast nobility; grave, golden ceremonial under the words: "If there is a paradise on the face of the earth, it is this. Oh, it is this."

Then picture a poor, half-starved weakling, afraid of the mice that gnaw his tattered robes, pleading tearfully for the mercy of his rude conquerors; around him men worn and grim and emaciated; the proudly jewelled *Diwan-i-Khas* now dark and dismal and desecrated; fierce men who know not the Koran demanding the last dregs of kingly submission; fine silken draperies torn and bedraggled; the glory of a vast imperial heritage but a foul rag in the gutter. What is this but a drama of greatness and frailty? Man rises to fall. That is the dirge of Old Delhi. It was the dirge which wailed in my ears during the four sweet, sad days I spent there.

The time to see Delhi is not when it swarms with tourists, most of whom regard her as a sun-baked oddity rather than as a lesson in historical perspective, but in the rains when she is fresh and cool and sweet. You get peace then to form your own conclusions; you are not jostled by the ubiquitous American who asks you: "Say, what's all this Saracenic business annieway?" You have not to beg and pray for a guide; your hotel hall porter is less detached in his manner, and you can procure a bearer without much love and more money.

A guide is useful, but he is a bore at times. Mine could talk the hind legs off a donkey. That was why I gave him ten rupees and said I knew the way back to the hotel perfectly. He grinned. Most Indians do when they meet an exquisite dissimulation; many of them do when you are only trying to be clumsily honest.

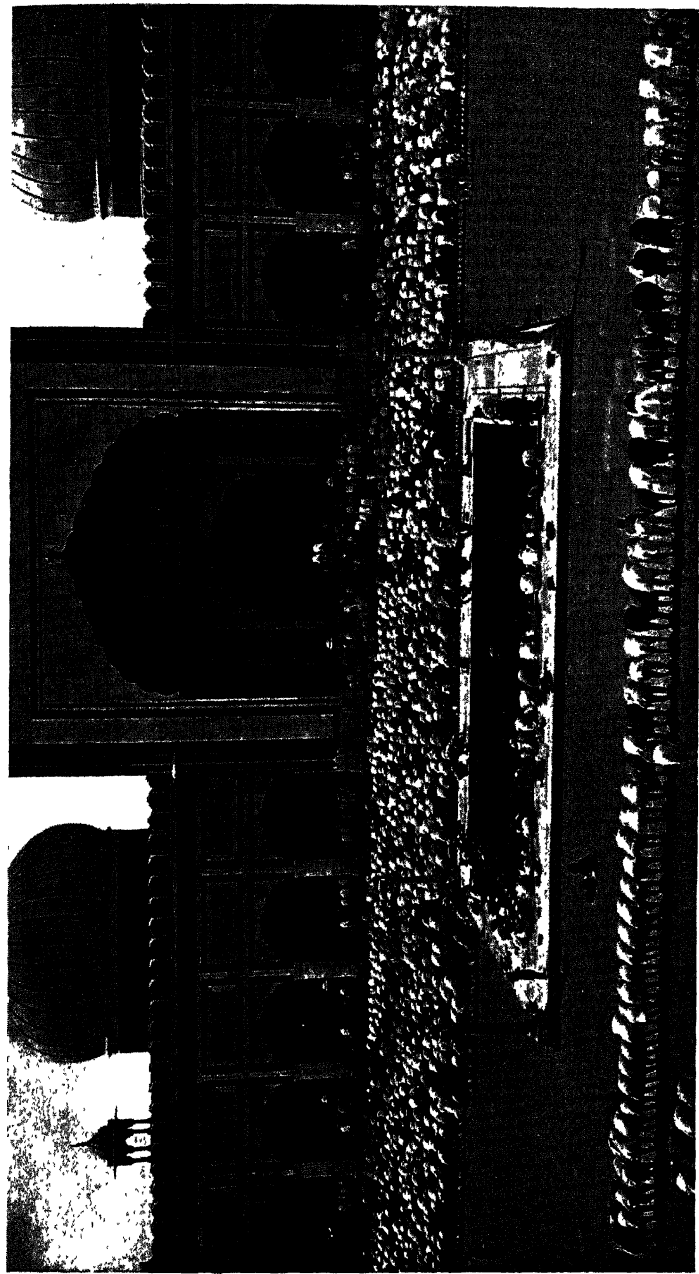
But, despite his grin, I returned to the Royal Palace or Fort. It is the most important thing in Delhi. Externally it is a high red wall with a few pavilions and warlike serrations

adding variety to it; extensive it is and not lacking in arresting properties, but a trifle dull. Internally, however, it is a glamorous treasure-house of interest. Here you find all the triumph and defeat of Mogul domination; the acme of Mogul art and the evidence of Mogul sensuality. In one section of the royal quarters there is the bed of the "Stream of Paradise." My guide had declared that this stream flowed from a perpetually scented fountain and that on it were sprinkled petals of exquisite flowers. The idea captured my imagination. Down the centre of this spacious audience chamber with the walls faceted with precious stones and the roof gracious with Saracenic sculptures this stream nearly two yards wide gleamed and sported in the light, its perfume and rose-red petals caressing the senses and whispering of soft and harmonious things. Around, glory and elegance and splendour; outside, the sun, white and radiant upon green grass and comely shrub. What a paradise for the sensuous; what a ministry for the poetry of life! No wonder Emperors sank into a delirium of luxury!

The whole place is Mogul in spirit, but as the Mogul Emperors, particularly in the earlier period of their power, had to employ Hindu architects and builders there are non-Mogul motives here and there. The carving is lavish and most delicate; the spacing of the different buildings regal and full of dignity. The first notable building one enters is the *Diwan-i-Am* or general audience chamber. Here the majesty of Eastern architectural design can be realised. The fretted Saracenic arch is everywhere, and so is the perforated marble screen. A series of marble pillars inlaid with mosaic work are mute witnesses to a glory that is gone. They supported the canopy above the imperial throne. Here deputations were received and court ceremonial enacted. Cringing beggars for pardon and proud foes acknowledging defeat; possessors of land suing for a privilege; leaders of a community requesting a lightened scheme of taxation—all, no doubt, came here; all beheld the royal majesty; all witnessed the imperial glory.

Between this building and the white marble Diwan-i-Khas is a green and spacious courtyard. I walked through it with a feeling of discomfort. I felt like an infidel on holy ground. My feet were not only on an empire's dust but also on ground consecrated by a great and beautiful faith. The sun poured down. I shaded my eyes to see the delicate, refined lines of the Diwan-i-Khas. They seemed to quiver with their own loveliness. "Very, very lovely," my guide had said of it. I recollected his emotion in tranquillity. The Diwan-i-Khas is not strong. It does not speak of might; only of art and ease and slightly effeminate taste. It is the Mogul Empire at its zenith. Conquest has been consolidated, the arts cultivated, luxury discovered. The machinery of government is like a festoon around a peaceful and sun-bathed land. India is an imperial garden in the midst of which Allah rules in a slumbrous ecstasy. Such is the message of the Diwan-i-Khas. There is pride in it; elegance and a sweet, rather self-satisfied holiness; it has aspiration with neatly embroidered limits, but no strength or determination. The days of Akbar are gone; the sword of Islam has covered itself with arabesques; the battle-cries that rang like the voice of Mohammed along the grim valleys of the frontier are silent; only the croon of conventional prayer is left.

And so one walks to the adjacent Pearl Mosque feeling that there is a nobility in struggle which is absent from ease. The Islamic dome can be pleasurably studied in this bridal-like Mosque. It is a casket of holiness, carefully and consciously beautiful; its builders have worked with delicate tools and hearts tenderly invaded with a sense of grace. Its spirit, however, is that of the boudoir; there is no sturdiness in it. One thinks of the red blood that flowed to win this for Allah, and then a feeling of vanity creeps into the mind. One wonders if man can ever translate an animating ideal into a lasting solace. The Pearl Mosque (Moti Musjid) is a solace, but it has a tremble in its voice. It knows that flowers bloom only in the summer and that a summer without a winter is



57 DELHI  
Mohammedans at prayer outside the Jamma Musjid





58 A Tiger Hunt, Nepal



59 Guarding a Palace  
ROYAL ELEPHANTS

denied by human experience. It has everything that satisfies the eye; a lovely, surely moulded dome, slender minarets, graceful tracery, and a white purity that rejoices. Before its frail daintiness, however, one sighs. It is too lovely to last. Why should purity and beauty be desecrated by that which has brawn in its arms and hair on its chest?

Before the largest mosque in all India, the famous Jamma Musjid, I stood in the still, white sun. Delhi all around me, red and grave and old. I had climbed a great wide flight of steps which were like an ascent to glory. I felt indeed glorified; minarets rose shadowless and serene; the great pointed Mohammedan doorway stood like gigantic hands in prayer; the trembling bulbous dome that sits so candidly under an Eastern sky was above me; murmured prayers were in my ears.

But what captured my senses were the long rows of prostrate figures touching the flagstones every now and then with devout foreheads. Now, they were on bended knee with heads hung and hands clasped; then, down went palms on the ground and two hundred faces were hid from the stupendous holiness of Allah; no sound; only snatches of murmured prayers and a soft sibilance as the worshippers raised or prostrated themselves. Colour everywhere; white robes and crimson fez caps, golden braid and a soft luscious blue. India, holy India! India leading the world in prayer. A Mohammedan prayer? Why not? Before the Jumma Musjid there is but one God and one prayer. He is a great Creator and demands a prostrated creature. Man has lost his fear, his reverence. Because he can count the electrons and strum the law of thermodynamics he has forgotten that he is but a stumbling confusion. India is wiser. She can pray. God help her ever to pray.

Such are men's thoughts before this great mosque. The Western mind does not know what reverence is until it has seen Mohammedans at prayer or heard the muezzin's birdlike call to worship.

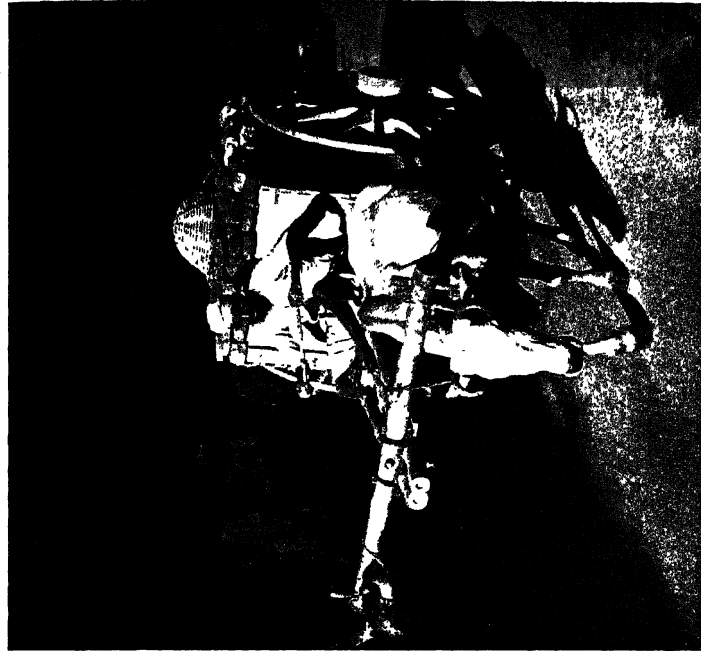
The Jumma Musjid stands commandingly on high ground not far from the Fort. The Fort and it, indeed, are the essence of Delhi. There are many tombs of solemn beauty, one of which is generally admired, the mausoleum of the Emperor Humayun. It stands some distance away from Delhi; a rather lonely but majestic pile. But how large and cultured is its sorrow!—the last resting-place of greatness. It impressed me more deeply than did the splendid mausoleums at Rome. Delhi, however, has to be seen. It cannot be described. As well describe *Paradise Lost*. It is not so much a city as an experience. I watched the curious camel-drawn wagons with interest; at the Kashmir Gate I put my fingers into cavities caused by invading cannon during the Mutiny; I heard of the bravery of John Nicholson and how he fell in the service of his country, and how Corporal Burgess applied the slow match to a nest of powder that blew the way open for victory; Hindu Rao and his noble fortitude fell like music on my ear—the passionate music of an almost inhuman valour. And yet I was sad. I was sad for the same reason that Delhi is sad. She has seen so much of life that she has a noble contempt for man. That night as I watched the quiet crimson sunset flicker for a moment on the white arches of my hotel I seemed to hear the rustle of imperial robes long mingled with the dust.

### *Calcutta*

The only challenge to Calcutta as the commercial capital of India comes from Bombay. Calcutta, however, does not mind. She is big and important enough to feel secure in whatever claim she makes on the admiration of men. She has a population of a million and a quarter and an immense shipping. But recent history has left a wound on Calcutta's pride. She was once the capital of India; she is not so now. What she is bold enough to call "political expediency" has given that honour to New Delhi. Thus does Calcutta join Old Delhi in sneering at New Delhi. Calcutta's sneer, however, has more bitterness in it. She feels like a king who

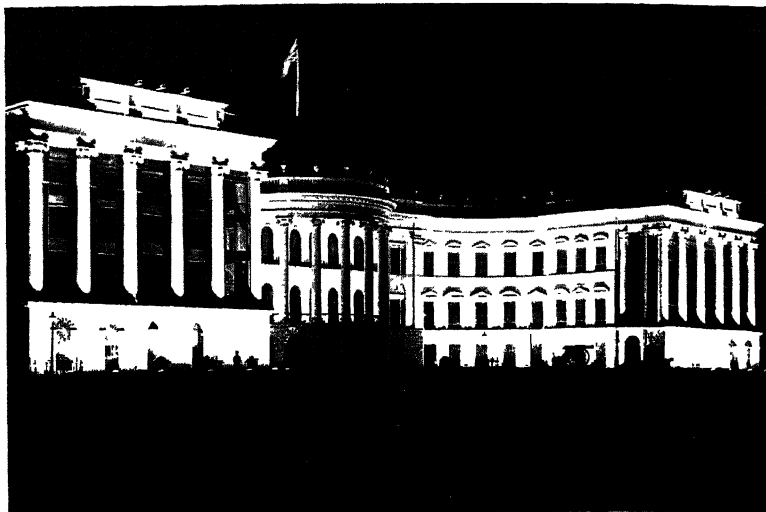


60 Bengali Woman

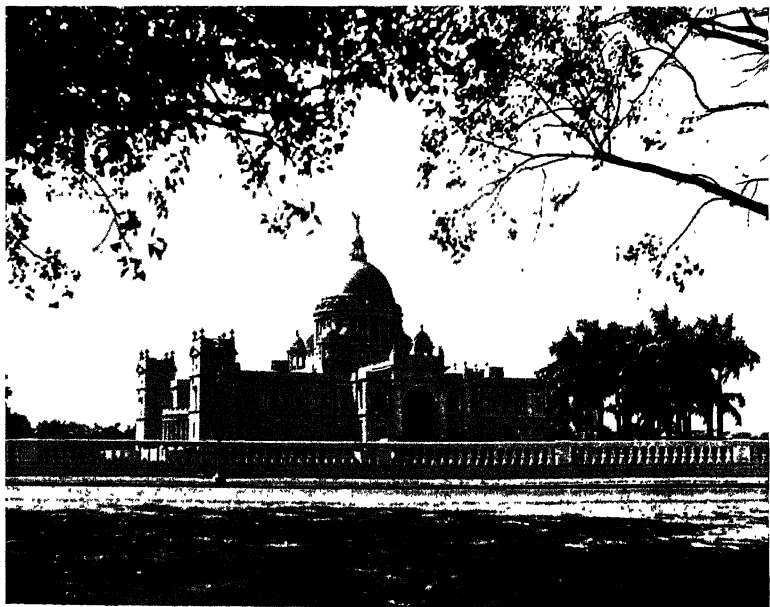


61 A Bullock Cart

CALCUTTA STREET SCENES



62 Government House



63 The Victoria Memorial



64 Chowringee Road



65 Near the Maidan

THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS QUARTER, CALCUTTA



66 CALCUTTA  
Beggars outside Kali Temples

has been deposed for no other reason than that his father was not the son of somebody else.

Calcutta's Government House was built for a premier city. You can tell that by the spaciousness of its design and the great height of its Grecian columns. It stands almost in the centre of the city within beautiful grounds rich in old trees. The front entrance is reached by a flight of splendid steps. During my five years' stay in Calcutta I attended more than one garden party at Government House and was privileged to see enter its portly gates in state Edward, Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor).

If Delhi is sad and ruminative, Calcutta is glad, busy and prosperous. She is the nerve centre of the jute trade of Bengal. Her Clive Street is a veritable university of jute knowledge, and at almost every hour of the day you can discern the peregrinations of astute business men rich in the lore of company acts and the mystic doings of the share broker. I believe you can still see an office *jaun* (horse-drawn conveyance). When I resided in Calcutta Clive Street was thick with them; their clamant bells and imposing drivers were everywhere; now the prosaic efficiency of the motor-car has almost extinguished this picturesque vehicle. Usually of a dull greenish colour and drawn by a single horse it was a most comfortable thing to travel in. Clive Street must sigh at its passing.

Calcutta's glory is her *maidan*. Without her *maidan* Calcutta would be like London without her Hyde Park. The word "*maidan*" has come to mean a public park or open ground; and this is exactly what the *maidan* is to Calcutta. One must not expect, however, a *maidan* in the East to be the same as a public park in the West. Conditions differ; and so does the character of the people. The average Indian has a great contempt for feminine trimness in landscape; his own country is a great, trailing untidiness. He likes a *maidan* to be an echo of the country (or *mofussil*). If you make trim walks with sinuous curves, he will leave them and walk on the grass. He is accustomed to narrow footpaths through the jungle;



that is why Indians usually walk one behind the other in the manner known as Indian file. A roadway to such a race of rural dwellers is an unwarrantable exoticism. And so they walk on the *maidan* grass until they have made pathways resembling those of the jungle. When they have achieved that, they feel comfortable; they have made the *maidan* capable of being enjoyed by rational human beings.

But that does not mean that the *maidans* in India are ugly. They are, on the contrary, quite the opposite. Ugliness is not always associated with untidiness; if it were so our mountains would be unbearable. And so Calcutta's *maidan*, despite the East's Eastern ways, is not unbeautiful. All that it lacks is trimness and a careful grouping of its trees and shrubs. It is space but not ordered space; a large, untidy freedom. It lies between Chowringhee (Calcutta's proudest street) and the Hooghly River on which the city is built. At one end are the Eden Gardens; at the other the Cathedral, and within this glorious green sweep the citizens have the utmost facility for sport and other employments of leisure.

Near the southern extremity of the *maidan* rises the All-India Victoria Memorial. This, of course, commemorates the long reign of India's first white Empress, Queen Victoria. It is a speaking likeness of the great Queen's times. Heavy, solid, massive, it proclaims sureness and dignity. A fine dome that gleams in a white radiance in the hot weather and remains like a pale hope amid the clouds of the monsoon season is supported by heavy masses of masonry designed with imposing regality. The fact that no other building is near it adds to its distinctive proportions. Inside, are placed relics of the great Empress's reign from every part of India, and the monument stands, to my mind, as a rival to the Taj Mahal in Agra. But while the Taj is grace and airiness, this is strength and permanence: the Taj is beauty and spirituality without a body; this is beauty and spirituality made to serve the practical ends of life.

Chowringhee has been compared with Princes Street,

Edinburgh; there is no comparison. Princes Street's greatness is that it has a castle to be seen from. There is no vantage-point from which to see Chowringhee. Calcutta is a deltaic city, and as such hasn't even a molehill to bless herself with. But Chowringhee has beauty in an old-fashioned sense. Looking, as they do, across the *maidan* her façades can be seen to advantage. They are an imposing array; but they are too fretful for modern taste. They proclaim another age; they are Chippendale chairs at a cocktail party. Someone with a Tennyson pen has described Calcutta as "the city of palaces." Looking at Chowringhee from the *maidan* one is tempted to agree. But the palaces are baroque and a trifle dusty; they are feeble with age; they tremble a little when the sun is without mercy or the monsoon smites with thunder in its roar. If you examine them closely you will find that many of them are but mere skins of whitewash on red brick with sweeps of grandiose stucco.

The Indian Museum is an exception. It is as obviously a museum as the Hooghly is a river. It is heavy and dull and prosaic. But it is not straining after effect. It has the courage to be plain. That is what I wish the other façades of Chowringhee had. However, many visitors to Calcutta adore Chowringhee; they say it knows how to look well; and it does.

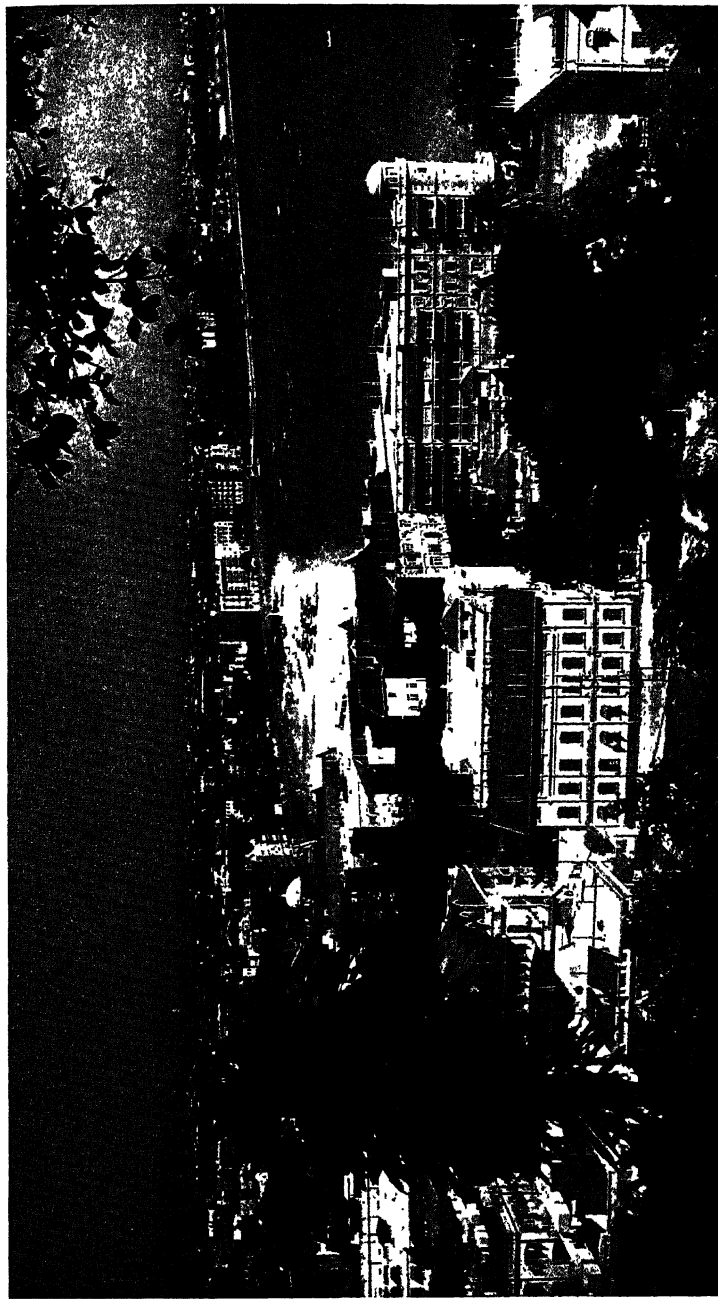
The Cathedral is Perpendicular Gothic with the usual adaptations which architectural style concedes to the East. But I wish architects would not drag bits of Greece and chunks of England into India and call them art. Gothic architecture in India is as happy as the Pyramids would be in Iceland. It is northern in spirit; its steep roofs are for the snows of the West; in India it is but a malarial outcast.

Calcutta suffers from a Development Trust. Perhaps that is not its official name, but it should be either suppressed or taught its job. The last time I was in Calcutta I found the city in semi-ruins. It rained like the dickens, and I jumped into a taxi and asked to be driven round the Burra Bazaar

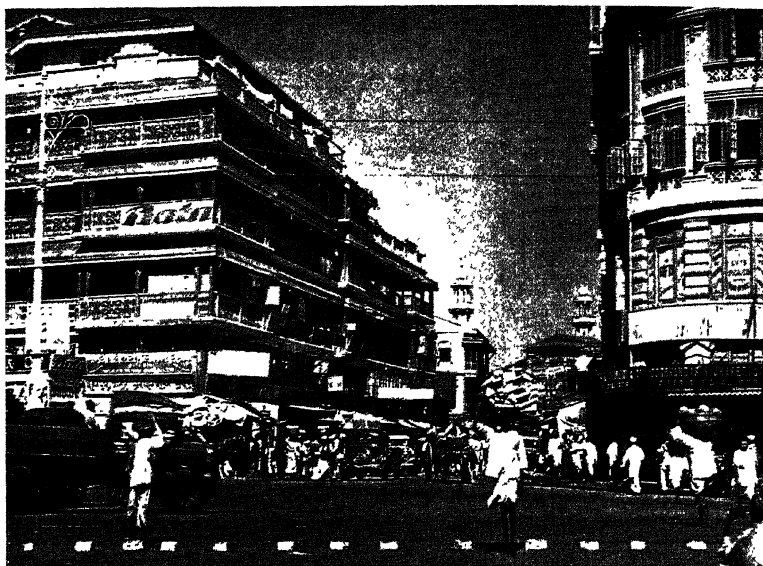
district. The taximan waggled a Sikhish beard and said, "*Bhot karab, sahib.*" He was trying to indicate to me in Hindustani that the place was a purgatory of ugliness; and so it was. I have never seen such a sorry mess in all my life. The district had been torn up by the roots to make a government schedule. A great, big, ugly road was being pushed through an area of Florentine romanticism like a cook's skewer through a birthday cake. Soon gigantic bulks of offices will rise, up will jump the rents and away the poor, quiet, simple folks will go. Very soon Calcutta will have nothing to show the tourist but an Indian *maidan*, a French boulevard and a Scottish jute wallah.

Thus is Calcutta changing. It has become ashamed of its own distinctiveness. Ships from all parts of the world sail cautiously up the treacherous Hooghly River carrying to it all the needs of a modern energetic community. Health and sanitation sing their tributes to a Westernism that knows not Vishnu; a nationalist corporation does all that Europeans wouldn't do (and probably for no other reason); business firms insist on employees staying south of Park Street, but very soon Calcutta will be a hybrid of Dundee and London without an aromatic bazaar to remind us that the earth is not comprehended in a runnelled street or a steel-framed façade.

Europeans have a good life in Calcutta, as far as that is obtainable in the East. Many declare it to be the nearest to London life in India. Certainly, unless one allows foolishness to spoil the quality of existence, Calcutta offers very pleasant conditions. Her houses are most up-to-date, and her streets, despite a Congress-ridden corporation, are more sanitary than most known to India. It is true that you can meet a jackal on the way home from the club as early as two in the morning, but neither the jackal nor the dozing *pariwallah* (policeman) at the street corner takes much notice of you. The one is after a juicy dustbin and the other is dreaming of a village in the Punjab. So what matters it? You can continue to smile at Jackson's story at the cocktail bar even if



67 Bombay from Malabar Hill



68 The Centre of the Indian Business Quarter



69 The Silver Market  
BOMBAY

the Ochterlony monument on the *maidan* quivers bewitchingly in howling junglehood.

There are golf courses to the south and to the north; the *maidan* gives you football in the rains and cricket at Christmas; in the Eden Gardens there is tennis as good as any in India, and in Dalhousie Square can be discovered a kirk where the Scottish believer may inform God as to the running of the universe. Hotels are good and restaurants gay. There is a zoo with a banyan tree as large as an English acre, and across the Hooghly is a grand new bridge that cost Calcutta twenty years of speeches on the old Legislative Council. What more does one want to make one's exile sweet?

### *Bombay*

Bombay is a zebra of a city. And I do not like zebras. Their beauty is too regulated—too much like that of a labourer's shirt or a clown's trousers. Bombay stripes her buildings. The result is far from satisfactory. Her university, for instance, is half-Gothic and half-Saracenic in a mottled coat. It shocked me the first time I saw it. The Victoria railway station is another shock. It is a zebra with a crocketed neck. And if you can imagine anything more impure or unnatural in design, you are welcome to it. It made me feel that my breakfast had not agreed with me. There is, however, something to be said for a railway station; it is not a statement in art; it is an organism of utility. But a university! Does it not walk with Socrates and reason with Plato? Does it not tell us why beauty is beauty and why art is not in a dustman's wagon? And yet there it is in a zebra's coat.

It is a pity, however, that the Bombay of the present should suffer for the Bombay of the past. I feel certain that the Bombay of the present is as anxious to do the right aesthetic thing as she is to do the right commercial thing. She is widening her streets and hunting down her mosquitoes. Her new buildings are designed with an artistic sureness that does her great credit. I was shown a new cinema on the sea-front

that had great taste as well as the necessary blatancy. Her harbour is a glory of dark island and gemmy water. On Malabar Hill can be obtained one of the best civic panoramas in India; out on her sea-blown suburbs whose palm-trees rustle softly all the livelong day one can bless the star that led to this entrancing spot. Take away its zebra buildings and Bombay is something very beautiful.

I never tire of the harbour at Bombay. I used to sit for hours on the veranda of my hotel and watch the dark, mysterious contours that enfold this magic sheet of water. The low hills were always alive to me; grimly, powerfully alive. In them was a silence that was terrible. I could never imagine any human foot on those islands; they were too remote from humanity; they who had seen the throat of a volcano and who were possibly as old as the Torridon Mountains; could they bear the shoe of a flapper or the stride of a man with a share to sell? I could not bring myself to think so. Some had bristles on their backs like crocodiles; others were merely dark and cindery; all, however, were Stygian and smileless; when the sun poured itself upon them they merely shrouded themselves in haze and remembered the volcano's throat.

The monsoon wept with intervals of April brightness the last time I visited Bombay. I arrived with the Frontier mail to find two charming Parsee ladies smiling a welcome for me. Their rich, silver-edged sarees matched their winsomeness. Please would I lecture for them? Of course I would lecture for them. Who would not lecture for a pair of angels who brightened a sad monsoon morning in this fashion?

We drove through the rain; Bombay was wet and sweet; the quiet grey sea hissed at us with ashen lips; fronded gardens were green and very still; Hindus held their dhoties as they walked; the sky was like an aerial river in spate; our taxi whined on the polished wet surface of the streets; the university tower rose intimidatingly into grey and lowering space.

"I hope you will like Bombay," came like music from the corner of the taxi.

"I am sure I will."

Round a corner and up a new street. Everybody was bending to the monsoon rain; umbrellas were like beetles on a sugared floor; most buildings had their green-coloured louver windows shut; shops were opening lazily.

The harbour glorious in a shaft of sunlight; far out a white ship still, still as a sleeping bird.

"How beautiful," from the corner of the taxi.

"Like a new dispensation," I heard the other angel say.

The gloved hand of the hotel attendant opened the taxi door. We alighted. In the entrance hall my angels stood while I signed the hotel register; they sparkled in the artificial light. I registered the thought that the West has much to learn from the East even in aesthetics. In all the world there is nothing more lovely than a Parsee woman in her saree.

"What shall you lecture on?" asked one of my angels.

"The new dispensation," I replied.

Needless to say my lecture was a great success!

Bombay's harbour is the finest in India, and it takes a foremost place in trade. The island on which the city is built is eleven miles long and three miles broad. Only a narrow neck divides it from the mainland, the sea washing round it with a wholesome and refreshing effect. As a commercial proposition, Bombay is supreme in the East. I am not sure that she is not one of the finest cities in the world. She has a dockyard area of over two hundred acres. The Prince's Dock, the Victoria Dock and the Ballard Pier or Mole are each well known. From them radiate travellers and merchandise to all parts of India and Burma. The city has something like 82 spinning and weaving mills, employing nearly 160,000 hands. The main exports are raw cotton, grain and seeds; imports piece-goods and machinery. Throughout Bombay's vast area are found many fine buildings, and I am not sure that its population does not now exceed 1,180,000.

For days I wandered round in the rain. I visited beaches



and talked with editors in their dens; wide streets poured and shone on me almost at one and the same moment; from the window of my hotel room I watched children play on a patch of green grass; when the rain came I saw them scamper for shelter with retinues of fat nurses in pursuit; in the evenings I mingled with the great cloud of citizens that comes to air itself around the "Gateway of India"; luncheons I had in cool and laughter-loving clubs; my religious imagination was kindled by the Tower of Silence; in the Prince of Wales Museum I saw much of interest, and down in the vast bazaar area I watched cloth being sold at half the price which Britain needs to produce it.

The Bombay bazaar dealer is not any different from the Calcutta or Delhi bazaar dealer. He may sell Zanzibar snuff or a freshly executed chicken. His methods, however, are ever the same. And they are as different from those of the West as the design of his shop or the aroma of his cooking-oven. He proclaims to the world a divine unconcern. That a customer should buy anything is the last thing to expect from a world that achieves the enormous in surprises. The West begs you to buy; the East begs you not to upset the rhythm of its betel chew. Sycophancy and a blatant insincerity make the customer in the West consider that the cosmos has need of his service; the customer in the East is lucky if he is made aware of his own existence. The Indian shopkeeper is Brahmanistic indifference; he flaps the flies away from his skilfully cut sugar cane as if he was the law of diminishing returns, and if you approach his frail wooden stall he does not even look at you.

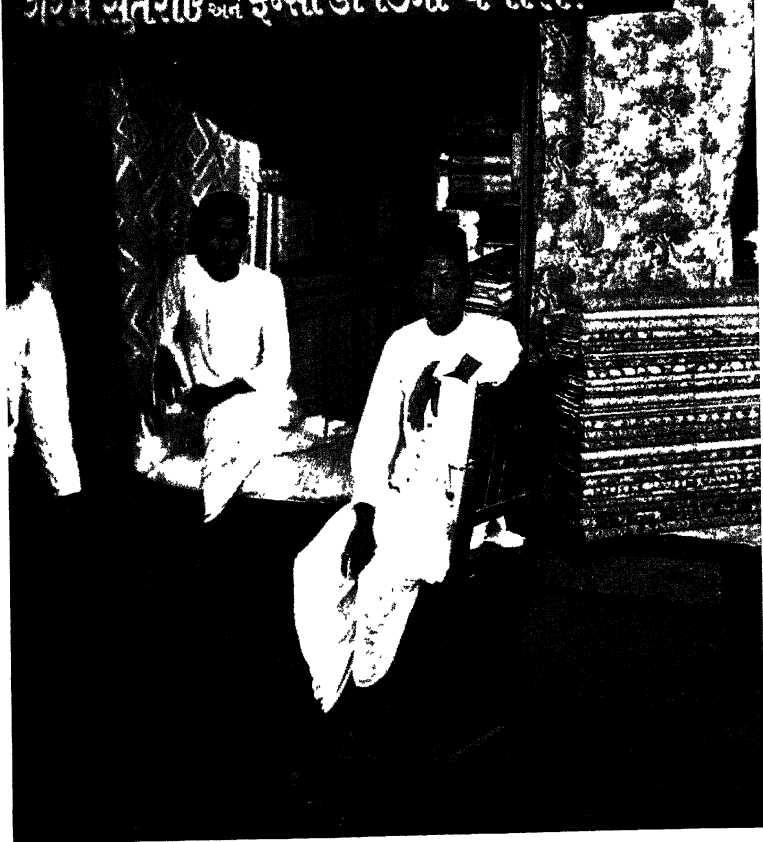
There are exceptions, of course. For some unknown reason a trunk-store keeper always wants you to buy. Perhaps it is because the traveller's trunk is not an indigenous article.

You get all castes in the bazaar; but Parsees are usually in the cloth trade. They are to the Hindus what the Scotsmen are to the English. They will grow rich where a Hindu will starve. And yet they are good and generous souls. The

180  
Mangaldas Market Lane N5

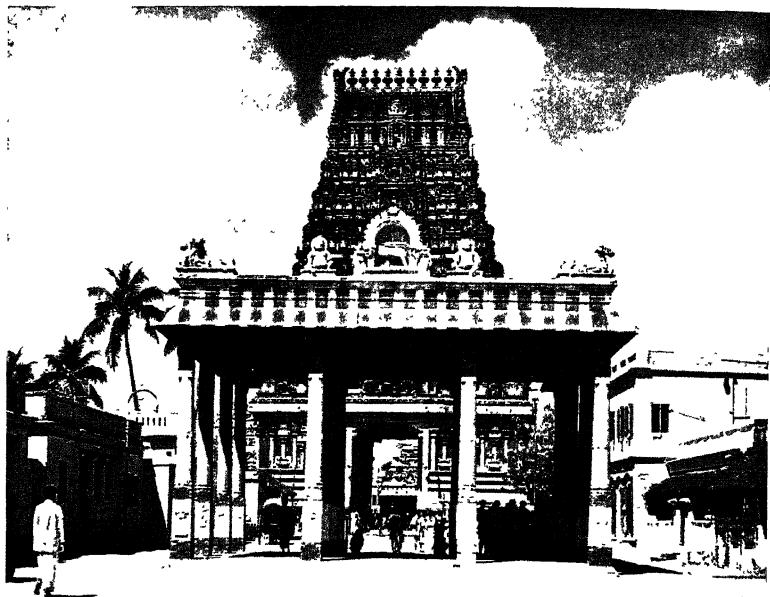
# કેન્સી શોપ

જી. વૃજલાલ કરસનદાસ ની કું.  
ગરમ સુતરાઈ અને કેન્સી કોપડના વેપારી.

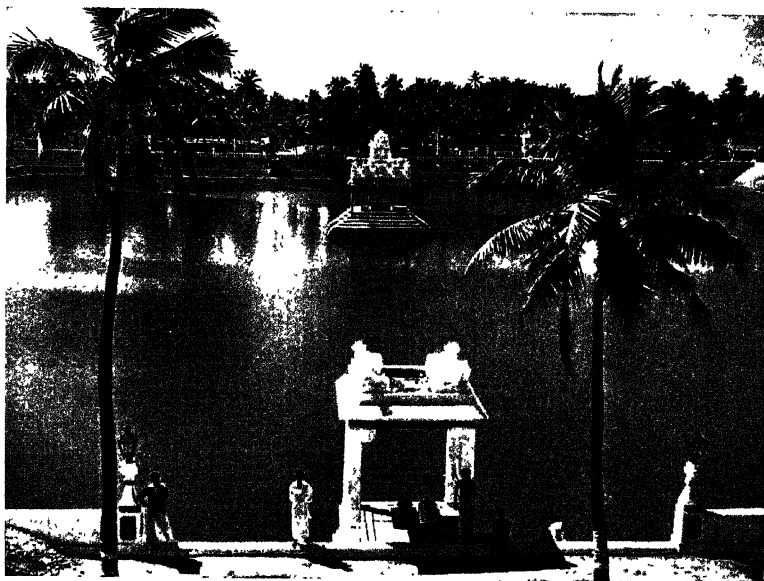


70 BOMBAY

A Fabric Shop on the Street



71 A Siva Temple, Madras



72 Temple Lake, Mylapore

Mohammedans are fond of the rice and dhal trade; you will find them prosperously fez-capped behind a gentle slope mounded with rice, dhal, chutney, nuts, potatoes, flour, caraway seeds and yellow-skinned onions. Hindus revel in tea-shops. They are also excellent bakers. They produce a marvellous pancake as thin as a sixpence and as extensive as a ship's port-hole. I have watched it being baked in a sizzling pan of fat on a clay-made oven jutting on to the pavement. I have never been able to understand why Indian ovens should always be on the public pavements, but they are. The cloth-shops are colourful. They have no windows, being merely wooden erections with a glossy platform not unlike a Western tailor's on which the shopkeeper squats with Buddhistic beatitude. Around him hang all the colours of the rainbow, and very beautiful they are. An unblended magnificence adds to their barbaric attraction. And the strange thing is that while the street is filthier than any farmyard, the shops themselves are spotlessly clean. Cheek by jowl they line the narrow thoroughfare, frail structures with eaves patched with tin, and yet all possessing an infinite fascination. Perhaps it is just because most of their possessors appear as willing to sell wares as a snipe is to pull a plough.

### *Madras*

You would not think so, but Madras has a history. That history is largely composed of the struggle for trade between the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch. As far back as the reign of Queen Elizabeth a charter was granted to a company "trading with the East Indies." But it was not until 1611 that a Captain Heppon of *The Globe* arrived at Pulicat on the Coromandal coast only to discover, to his chagrin, that the Dutch were not only there already but that they stoutly refused him permission to land. Heppon made his way up to Masulipatam and from that day the British connection with this part of the country began. It is a stormy story. I do not want to tell it here. But, after much

searching and sore worry an English colony was established at Madraspatam. The original conditions were that the Europeans should be confined to one part of the town and the non-Europeans to the other. Thus was the early Madras a black town and a white town.

Dealings in calicoes and muslin, the proximity of the Golconda diamond mines and a "considerable trade with China, Persia and Mocha" were apparently the elements of Madras's original prosperity. A fort was built, but it was a mere shell, and when the French came along in 1746 they found it an easy prey. For three years the French flag waved in the sea-breezes of Madras, then the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle restored it to the British.

There is much more to be told about Madras and how it developed; about the memorable siege of 1758 and how its brave defenders were animated by the best instincts of colonising human nature; but I will pass on to what there is to be seen there.

It is in some respects a dusty hole. When you land you are agreeably impressed, and then you begin to wade in dust and to hear the clang of dirty-looking tramcars. Palm trees will wave stiffly above you, and there will be a romantic gleam on the waves at the sea-front; but the dust insists on being seen and felt. You are driven to the Cathedral built in the Italian style; at Government House you may be shown the picture of Eyre Coote whom the old Sepoys used to salute with such reverence. A museum of some fame and great interest is also in Madras, while everybody who lives in the district is proud of the Observatory. It was established before the British Crown became responsible for the government of India, and is a memorial to the desire of early settlers to advance human knowledge under the blazing suns of the East.

Those who like Madras like her very much. On the other hand, those who do not like her never tire of cursing her. She is thus one man's food and another man's poison. She has great trade, and is packed with busy commercial houses. The

political processes of the Madras Presidency take place within her walls, and, generally, she believes herself to be a city of no meagre importance. Her culture is Dravidian, and most of her Hindu temples are of the imposing saddleback design.

Madrassis are delightful people. I think I like them better than any other class in India. They are not so clever as the Bengalis, but they are more virile in speech and manner. While they are never rude, they are seldom servile, and they have an abounding respect for British military history. Whether that respect would have been so abounding had not the British beat the French it is not easy to say. But even Shakespeare's fame depends on the fact that he was Shakespeare.

Madras typifies the south of British India, just as Calcutta typifies the east, Bombay the west, and Delhi the north or Mogul British India. The population of Madras is nearly 600,000, and its corporation is the oldest in India. The original "black town" was renamed Georgetown in 1906 on the occasion of the royal visit.

### *Benares*

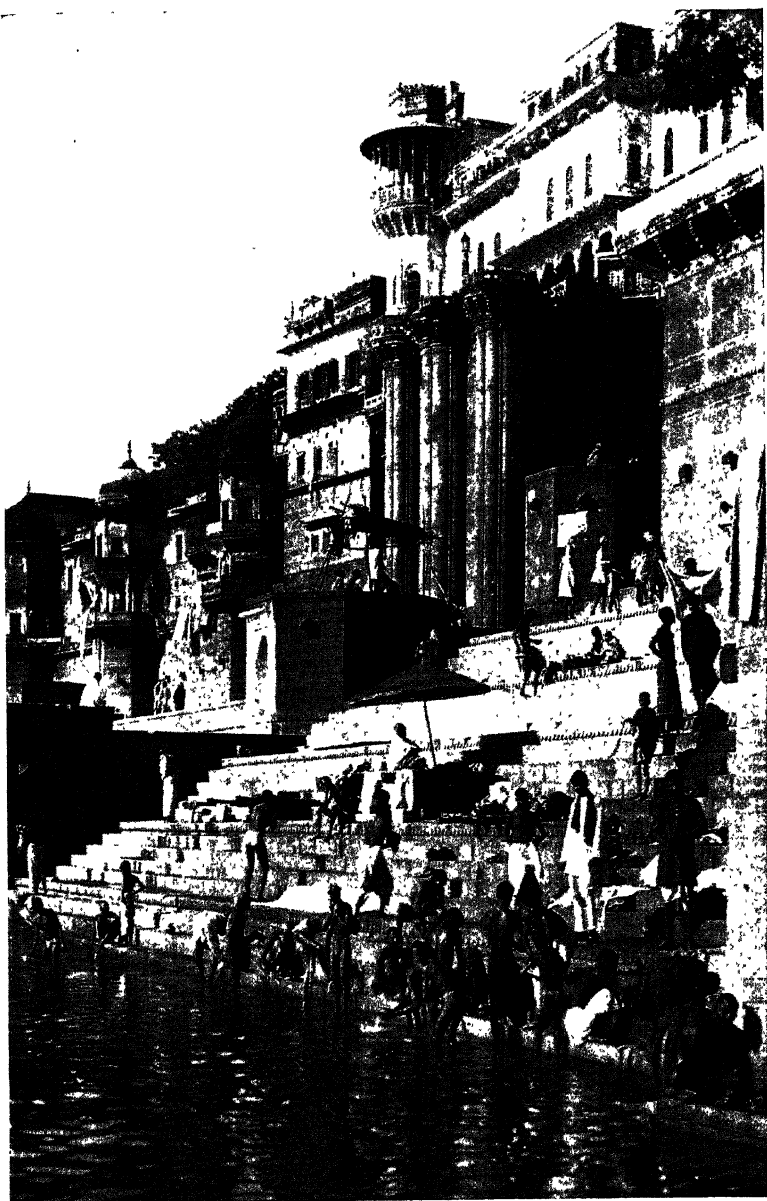
If Delhi is holy to the Mohammedans, Benares is holy to the Hindus. It is a city of the temple and bathing-ghat. There are mosques, too, but they are like gulls at a crow's wedding. The atmosphere is against them. Benares is Hindu from plinth to abacus, or, rather, from the Golden Temple to the Panch-Kos Road. Out of every corner of Hindustan come those who desire healing and blessing. The city swarms with pilgrims and priests. It is built by the sacred River Ganges in which to bathe is joy and freedom from sin. The temple spires are a forest; and, like all temples in all Indian cities, they have apparently grown like wild roses on an escarpment. There does not seem to be any reason either for their position or their alignment. They are there, and Benares has to adapt herself accordingly. Benares, indeed, is a picturesque confusion. Her houses face in all directions and regulation in architecture is as foreign to her as the feet of Gamaliel.

But what a glorious architect is Confusion! She it is who must have built the mountains and formed the design of the constellations. Look at Benares from the river; watch the setting sun set fire to temple after temple; see the darkening red of the horizon embroidered by holy spires; sink into the warm, stirless night as light after light comes to jewel its darkness; hear the strange, curving melodies of a pilgrim's bivouac, and feel the swarthy bosom of the river bearing you gently off to its unanswering stillness.

No man has experienced the solemnity and sweetness of India until he has visited Benares. It is India's heart. India's quiet, dreamy, meditative heart. Streets are narrow and none too clean; orange skins rot reverently in the fierce sun. But what matters it? Is not reverence an unassailable wisdom? What is a sanitary inspector to a priest who can invoke Ganesa? What is a hygienic precept to a blessed melting into non-incarnate peace?

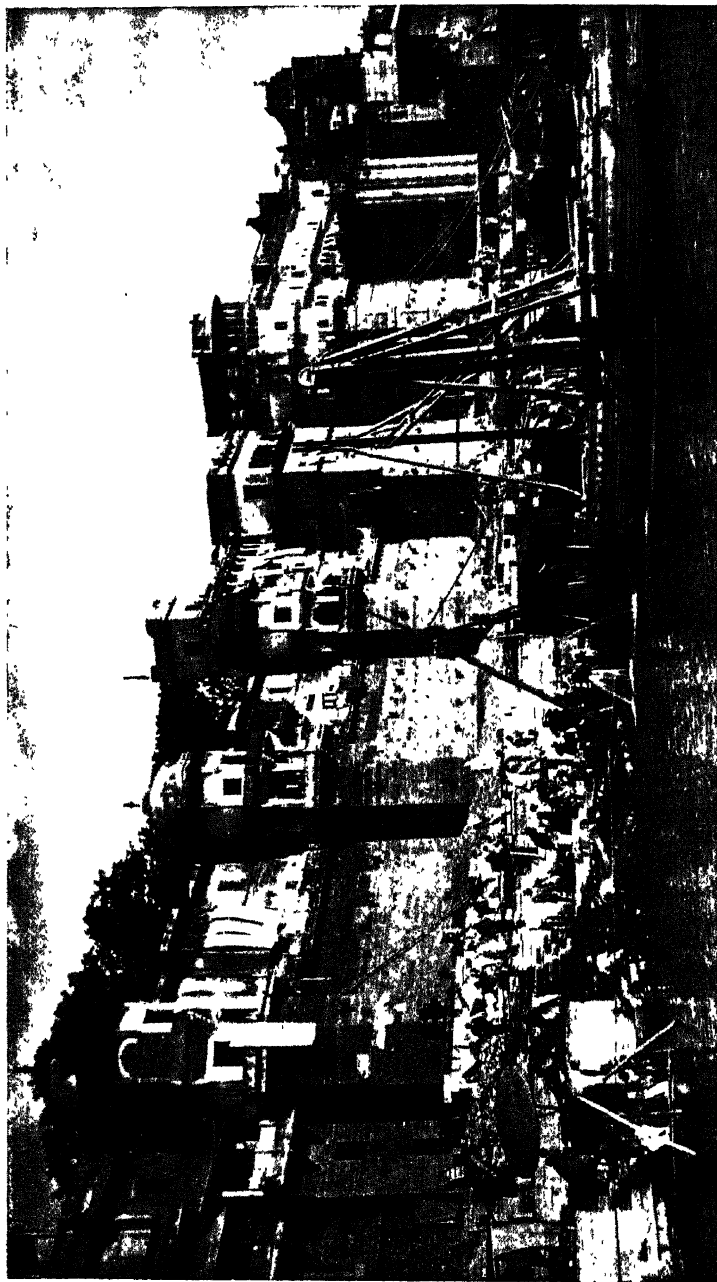
In Benares men ask for their dearest hopes. They seek the gods in cool, dark temples and prostrate themselves like miscreants before a king. Every god in the Hindu pantheon is there. Ganesa gives them wisdom and prudence; Siva is the great generator; Anapurna protects her devotees from hunger; Saniscara will be like a flaming fire of remorse to those who neglect to do him honour. And so on. Temple after temple can be visited. The same scenes are witnessed; men asking for bread; women imploring for fertility; the merchant requesting that prosperity will rain on him like a monsoon day; the rich man that his sons may walk in the ways of wisdom and piety.

To Benares there is no Galileo. The sun is still a manifestation of an unknown power; the Ganges flows from the miraculous to the miraculous; stars peep on her because even the gods must have eyes. Benares lives in a religious dream. To her the world is peopled with mysteries; cause and effect is a vulgar impiety; there is no light except vouchsafed light.



73 BENARES  
Bathing in the Holy Ganges

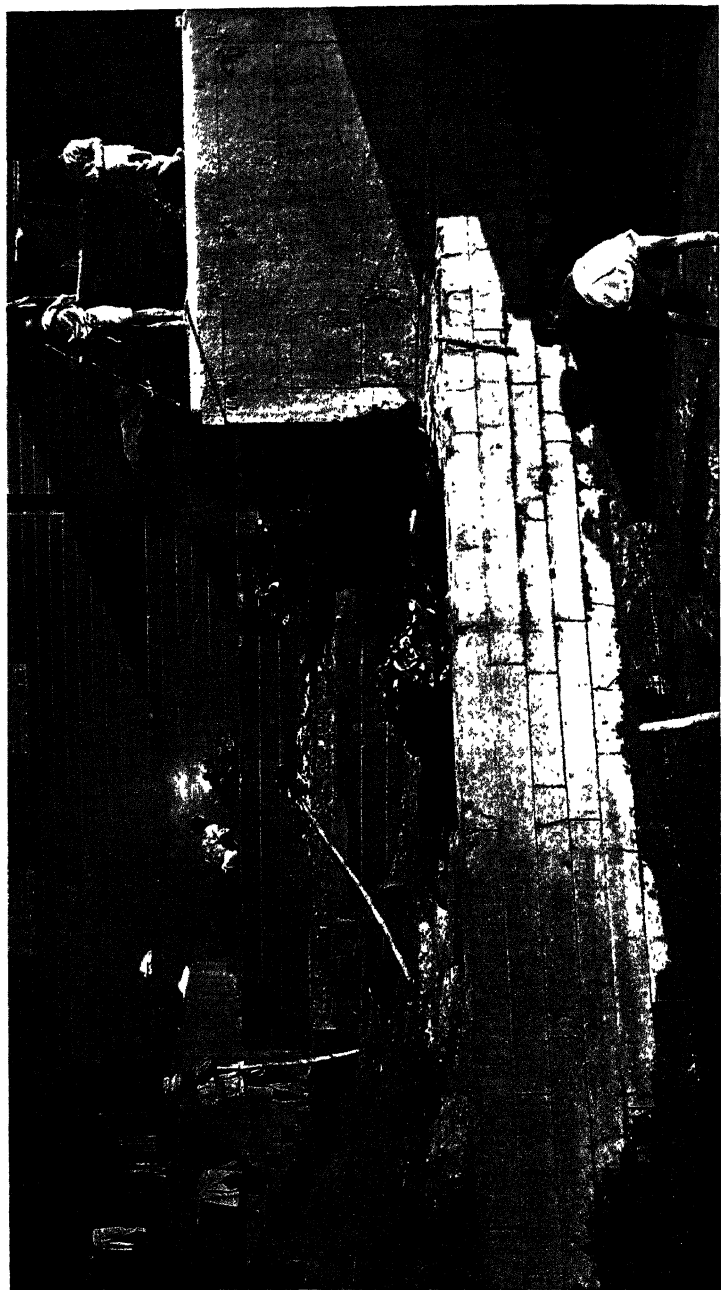




74 The Ancient Walls of Benares



75 Benares: A busy scene beside the Ganges



76 Benares: Hindus burning the Dead

Men and women swarm on her bathing-ghats. Even young children are plunged into the sacred waters that Kharma may not rule in their hearts. The water is as full of matter in suspension as a plate of broth; but physical cleanliness is a poor substitute for spiritual absolution. Warily the old men descend the steps; at the edge they are helped by the members of their family and slowly and painfully they sink on their knees until the holy fluid covers their shoulders. For a moment their thin, wizened faces seem to float on the water; a gleam of wild rapture enters their eyes, and then, straightening themselves, they turn cautiously and hobble out. Their dhoties sag in muddy saturation, thin, old legs drip and long, lean arms glisten in the westerling light. A young man whose torso runnels takes the old man by the arm until he has hobbled up the steps and, by a deft manipulation of cloth and dhoti, is both cleansed and dry.

Women with dark hair serpentining their necks and their bodies outlined in wet clothing, boys sporting as nature made them, girls shy and screaming, men of middle age careful that as much of the wondrous river should cover them as possible, and grey-haired creatures whose root-like necks declare many years of hard motherhood are all there. All are being cleansed and sublimated. Flashes of colour rest on the ghat steps where the bathers' clothing lies. The water ripples on the slimy bank and laves the much worn steps; tiny cries, movement, splashes, bobbing bodies, wet hands running over wet arms. Gravity and earnestness everywhere. The river goddess glorying in her own appeasement; man being purified more effectively than science could ever do; ignorance and wisdom in a holy synthesis.

### *Agra*

Agra without her Taj Mahal would be like a guinea without its gold. There is a good enough bazaar there, oceans of sand and a desert-like stillness in the evening. The houses of the poor are incapable of standing up to the first suggestion

of a Yorkshire breeze, and, during the hot weather, the whole place is as thirsty as a Frontier camp.

But it has an immeasurable glory. Go to the Taj Mahal and see there the wonders of love in art. Shah Jehan, one of the richest of Mogul Emperors, loved his chief wife with burning sincerity. And she was worthy of his love. She was beautiful and good. At least so we are told. Her name was Mumtaz-i-Mahal (Exalted of the Palace), and she was a gracious presence in the royal household. But she died. Shah Jehan was so grief-stricken that he decided to build for her a monument that would be a joy for ever. And so he built the Taj Mahal. It has been a joy ever since the last marble stone was placed on its noble dome. I am not to describe it. There are things in the world that defy description as completely as poetry defies translation. Its beauty is in its love; it has the mould and spirit of love. Not the strong, virile love of a man of the sword, but the gentle, sweet affection of one refined heart for another.

Shah Jehan saw in his lovely wife something that was very precious, not alone to him but to the whole world. We can all enter into sympathy with him. Life generally is an ugly disorder. It scrambles in a covert selfishness; beauty it buys and sells; there is nothing sacred to it. Its mouth is gory with the blood of trusting innocence. Shah Jehan, craving for love and beauty, found both in his wife. She was to him what the world was not. He saw in her the personification of all that was fair and gentle in life, and so this poet in an emperor's robes resolved that his wife's graces and goodness should sing to generations in an imperishable sonnet. The Taj Mahal is the result.

Shah Jehan was no singer. His responsibilities were too great. He could feel beauty; he could not express it. But there were thousands willing to carry out his behests. He commissioned those with skill to build for him a flower in stone—a gentle, loving, beauteous flower. That is what the Taj is. It speaks no harsh word. It is soft, chaste, modulated.

It has a woman's tenderness and a white, transfiguring holiness. Love gleams pure and exalted from pinnacle and dome. Study the lines of the Taj. They are all slender and exquisite. Carving, dome, shadows—all light, kindly and benevolent. The sun makes it shimmer like a queen; but it is a queen robed in love and a fragrant goodness. The Taj does not command; it only smiles and enchants. It has power, but it is the power of a pearly star in a vast darkness.

It points upwards; its aspiration is not of this earth. Around it grow trees and shrubs. As if catching its spirit they also point upwards. Behind it runs the Jumna River. It is a quiet, chaste stream. There is nothing vulgar or overfed about it. Even it reflects the calm of this holy thing.

There are other beautiful things in Agra. The Royal Palace is a strong regal dignity, and, six miles away, is the tomb of the mighty Akbar. He was a man who essayed one of the greatest undertakings in statesmanship India has ever seen. He tried to unite once and for all Hindu and Mohammedan. On both religions he smiled benevolently. He was not a man who regarded one set of religious ideas more precious than another so long as they were sincerely held. Surely it was being valorous about a shadow to declare that God rode in one holy chariot and spurned all other holy chariots.

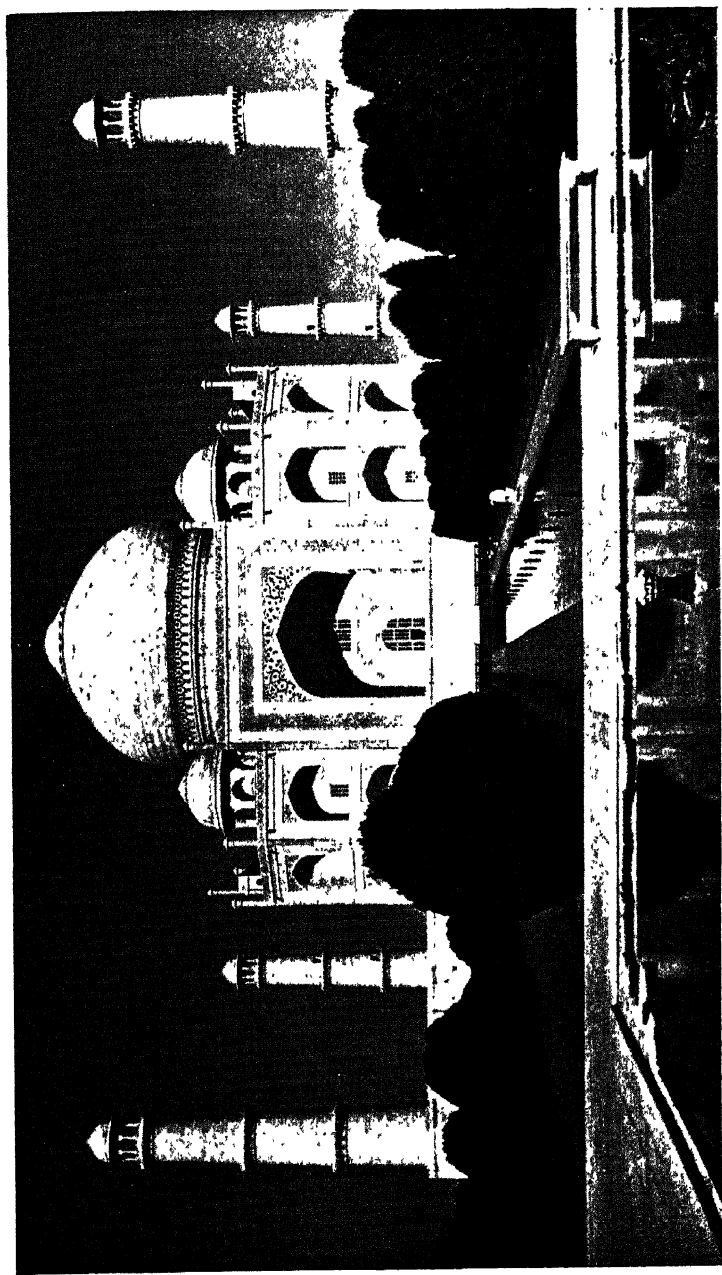
But Akbar found it easier to conquer a nation than to conquer human nature. Mohammedans and Hindus can be friends, but Allah will never be a transmigrationist. Can the Holy Grail be a jungle shadow? Thus did Akbar fail. He had no visions of abstract beauty like Shah Jehan, but he saw that an empire in religious discord was something which neither Allah nor Vishnu could bless. It cut across his sense of the perfect, and made the victories of his sword the tormentors of his heart. Poor Akbar, he had not learned that so long as one star differs from another in glory so long will human nature cling to an averseness to be blessed unless for strictly practical reasons.

Akbar's tomb, however, proclaims his greatness and

majesty. His son, who built it, wanted it to be "so exquisite that the travellers of the world could not say they had seen one like it in any part of the inhabited earth." It has not come up to Jehangir's ambition, but it is grand and noble nevertheless. I thought there was just a quavering note of disappointment about it. Its virility was controlled and in good taste. But the arches with decorated spandrels struck me as things that had turned their back on the glamour of human achievement. Perhaps all tombs suggest that more or less. Certainly others I have seen in Delhi do.

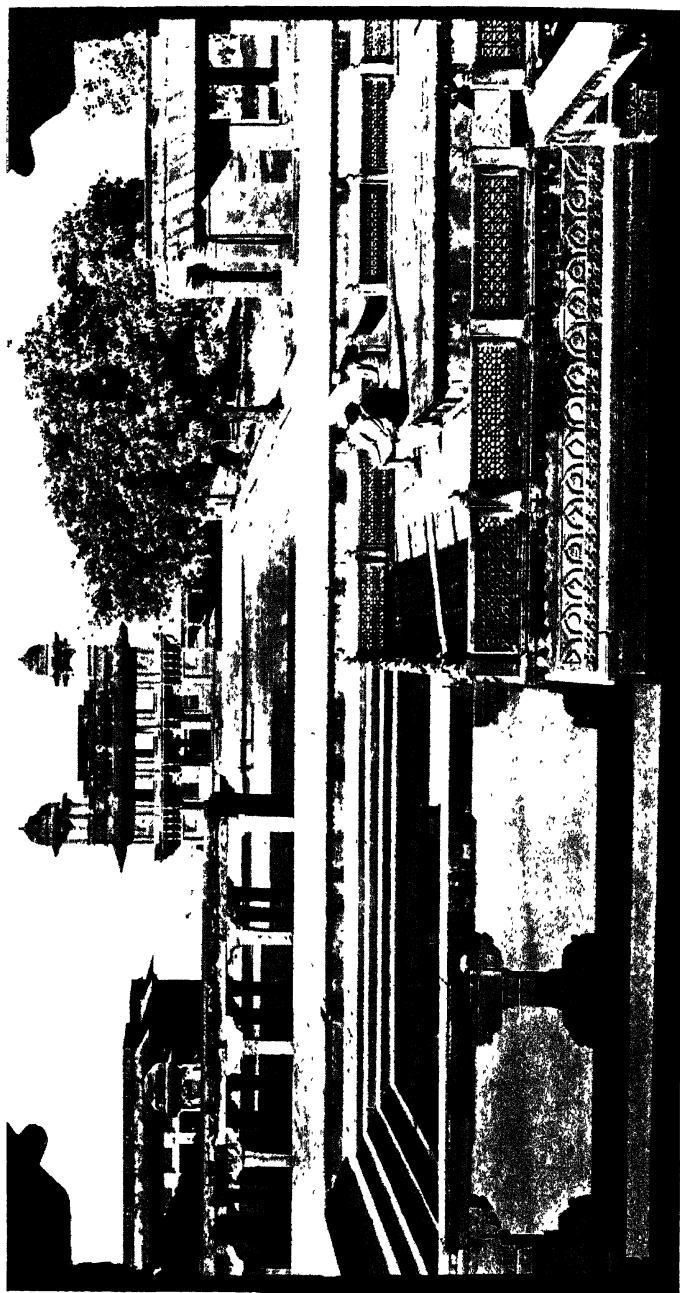
Agra is different from Delhi. Delhi dreams plaintively of stern, far-off glories; Agra is the frail old visionary that has tried to place his visions on human record. Those who think that Agra has succeeded will love the Taj; those of opposite opinion will complain of the dust and the smell from the bazaar. This royal city, however, will live as long as the frail fingers of civilisation can grasp the sword of reason. No vulgar mind will like Agra. I doubt if the so-called rationalist will like it. Agra has had a grim ancestry, but its heart has been purified. With the desert not far away it has stretched forth its hand for beauty. It did not succeed in seizing it, but in the Taj Mahal it has come as near to the realisation of a heavenly ideal in an earthly form as is possible for the imperfect powers of men.

Agra fort is scarred with battle. During the Indian Mutiny it held out for four months against the rebels until Colonel Greathed's column came to relieve it. One cannot walk along its old Saracenic halls without a sense of reverence. Sacrifice is a sacred thing. It is sacred even when it is misdirected. The great deeds done in Agra not only by British but also by Hindus and Mohammedans make history the precious foolishness it is. Agra is 111 miles from Delhi, but it has a plenteous share of Delhi's glory. Akbar loved Agra and made it his capital; Shah Jehan was enamoured of Delhi and made it his capital. Thus are the two cities festooned with Mogul greatness.



77 The Taj Mahal, Agra

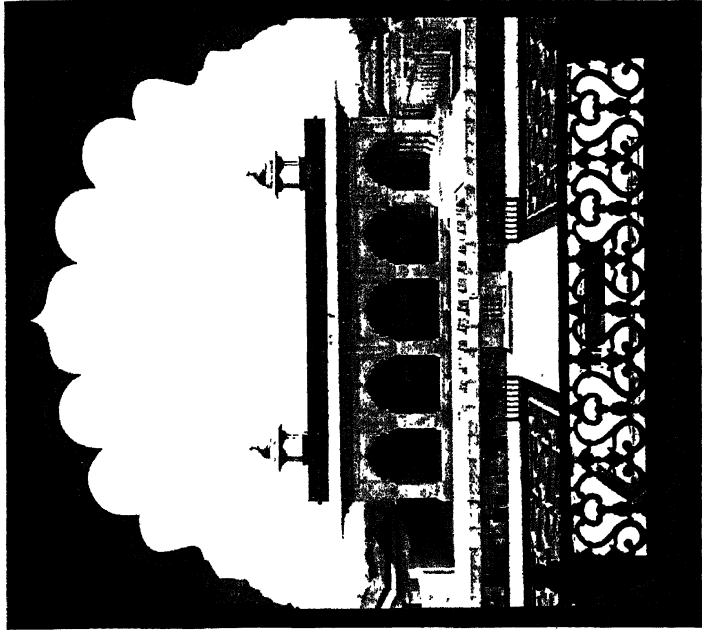




78 FATEHPUR-SIKRI, NEAR AGRA  
The one-time summer residence of the Emperor Akbar



79 Arches of the Pearl Mosque

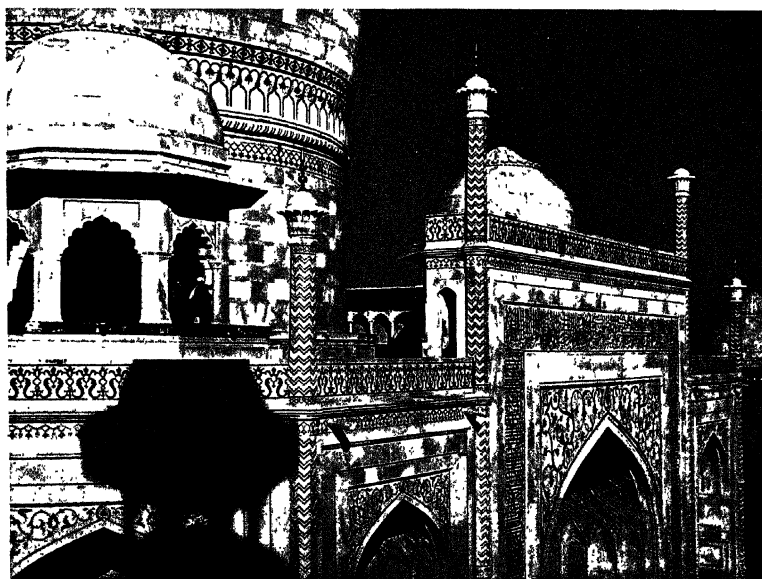


80 Part of the Royal Residence

AGRA



81 Detail of the Pearl Mosque, Agra



82 Façade of Taj Mahal, Agra

MOHAMMEDAN ARCHITECTURE

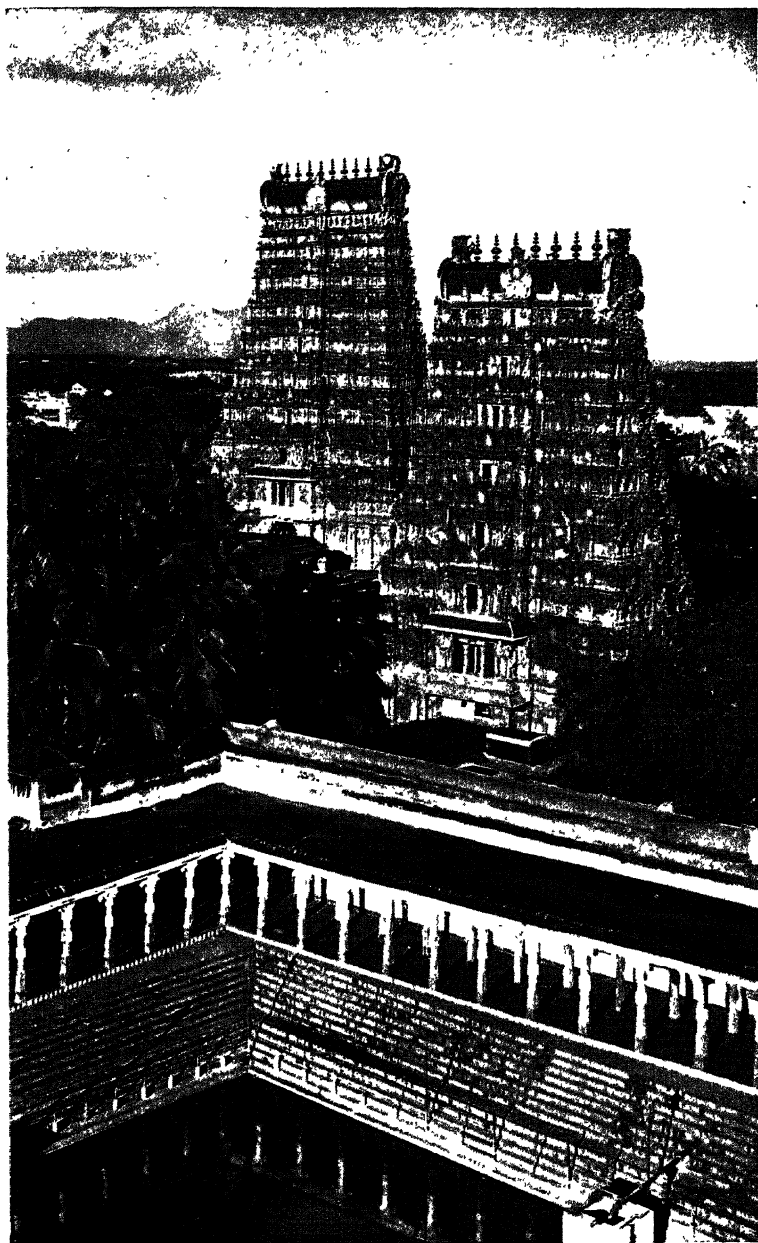
Outside Agra (22 miles distant) is Fatehpour Sikri which may be described as the royal country seat. Both Akbar and Jehangir held courts there. It is, therefore, a place of distinction although more or less in ruins. It is a mass of state apartments and has a mosque of great beauty. Around it the winds of the desert moan, while, above, the Indian stars proclaim that man's glories are but a glimmer in the universal day.

## CHAPTER V

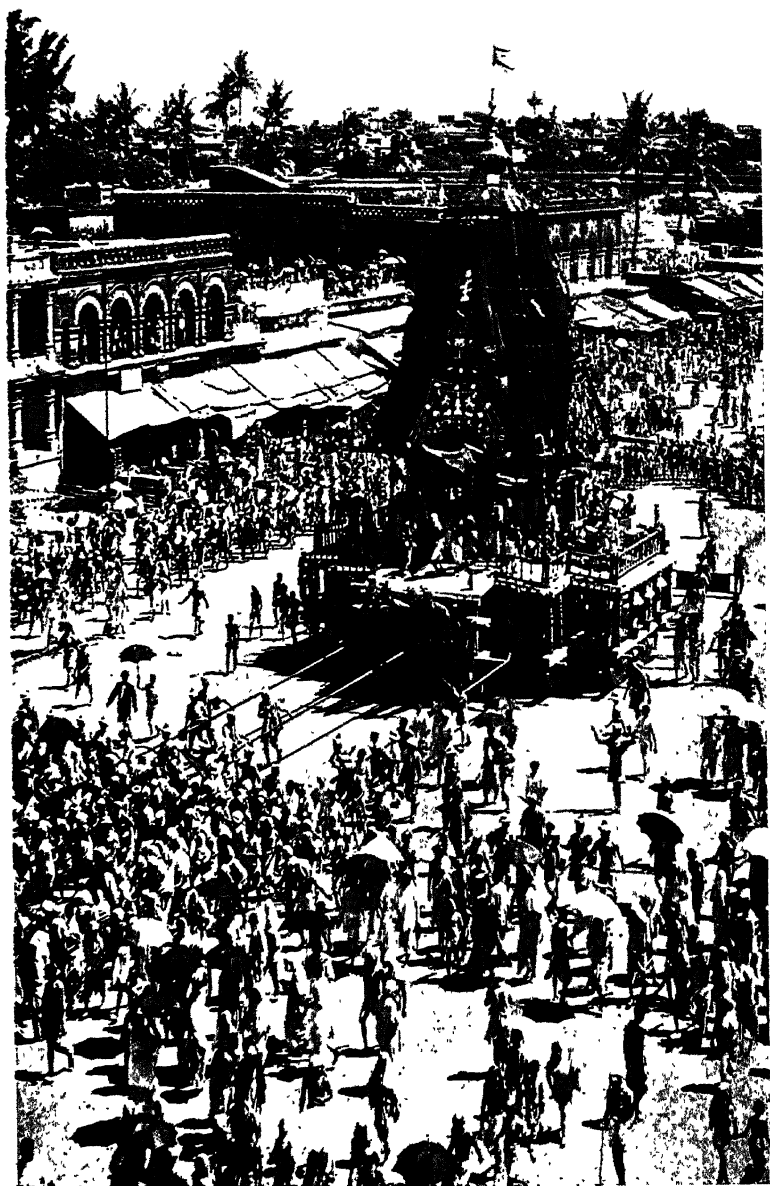
### RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHY

ONE approaches the religions and philosophy of India with reverence. They are magnificent structures, so closely related as to be almost entirely inseparable. It is fairly generally admitted now that a religion is, in its natal simplicity, but the response of the human mind to forces it does not understand. The Hindu or Brahman religion began as such. Its early evidences are childish. It rose very little above a belief that inanimate nature was the agent of a malicious divinity; something to be placated and feared. Streams, hills, trees and oddly shaped stones were given the same status as totems and idols in more advanced systems. In this the early Indian religion was little different from that of other primitive peoples. The first urge was for food and children, and nearly all the religious exercises were directed towards the attainment of these two aims. Food was necessary for sustaining life, and children were necessary for procuring food. The forces of nature were lauded so that they might give these two things in abundance. That was why sacrifices were made and gifts brought to the gods. Only women were allowed to sow certain seeds because it was women who bore life. The early Aryans were religious homoeopaths; they tried to induce like by like.

They had, however, important differences from other races. We are not yet so full in our knowledge of the source of racial characteristics as to dogmatise regarding any given instance, but there can be little doubt that the geographical environment of the early Aryans had an immense influence on their character. Many believe that they originally migrated from an indefinite region near the centre of Asia, but I would not like to be certain regarding this. It has been established, however, that the early Aryans spent much time among the Himalayan



83 Saddle-back Temples, Madura



84 PURI, SOUTH INDIA  
A Hindu Religious Procession

mountains. Anyone who has seen this stupendous region will realise what reactions it induces. The mind of man becomes passive before its unearthly majesty; it loses belief in its own equipment and is powerfully constrained to put its trust in greater and sublimer forces. Had the Greeks lived amid such snow-draped wonders they would never have made their religion and art exercises in moderation.

The Aryans, therefore, became a poetic and imaginative people. To them Mount Everest and Kinchinjunga were thrones of the mysterious; their great wild shoulders were white because the gods walked there; as the naked Indian sun poured its radiance on nature's masses it did so to warm the gods' feet and to give them the light which they desired; when the stratified mists, only less pure than the snows on the peaks, rose slowly every morning from the valleys and lay in exquisite scarves on the mountain's breast they did so at the behest of sprites more closely in league with the universe than man; far over quivering plains forests wandered, brooding and awful in order that the gods might rest there in a divine slumber.

Thus is the religion of the Hindu rich in legend and stupendous allegory. It carries more gods than the ordinary reasonable man can understand, and certainly more than he can approve. Beautiful and sublime although many of its manifestations are, they cringe in the searching light of scientific examination.

But at the core it is a religion of great dignity and beauty. Its wrestlings with reality are as courageous as any in the whole history of mankind, not excluding that of the Greeks, and the vast wisdom of its practical organisation must hold our admiration. There remain many crudities in it; but I know no religion which has attained any degree of general acceptance which had not at one time just as many, if not more. Human thought was never a clear river; it is still a carrier of much silt, and the history of human advance is largely a lesson in sedimentation.



Indian thought has generally been contemplative; it has seldom been enamoured of the material side of life. The great mountains and the clean-horizoned plains have headed Indian metaphysics away from the utilitarianism which marks modern speculation. The Indian has never made the mistake of confusing appearances with realities. He has put no trust in human capacity, feeling that when compared with the deeps of the unknowable it is but a point against infinitude. That is why he discards thought excepting in so far as it ministers to right knowledge and seeks to reach the universal good through the medium of contemplation. Others have had the same idea, but it was perhaps the Aryan who first evolved the idea that God was not so much a mental conception as a spiritual quietude; that man reached Him not only by having right ideas of Him but also by having the right attitude to Him. The human soul, he held, was capable of expanding its divinity to such an extent as to touch the fringe of that vaster and purer divinity which was behind all the half-understood phantasmagoria of creation. Unless it did that its chance of escape from rebirth and pain was remote.

In the earlier stages of Hinduism the Vedas were written. These are a collection of hymns addressed to such natural phenomena as the sun, the sky, fire, etc. They are simple and unphilosophic in construction, representing the untutored reactions of the human heart to things beyond its comprehension and under whose control are its interests, material and spiritual. There is no attempt to reason or to differentiate in early Hinduism; the forces of nature are simple and behave according to no principle of good or evil. Priesthood was building up ceremonial; but even these holy men reacted without systematised reflection to the accidents of life. It was only later that Hinduism was to spread a firmament of sternly observed conclusions about man and his circumstance over the vast old land of India.

We find the essence of Indian philosophy in the Upanishads. They first appear about the seventh century B.C. and





86 A Parsi Confirmation



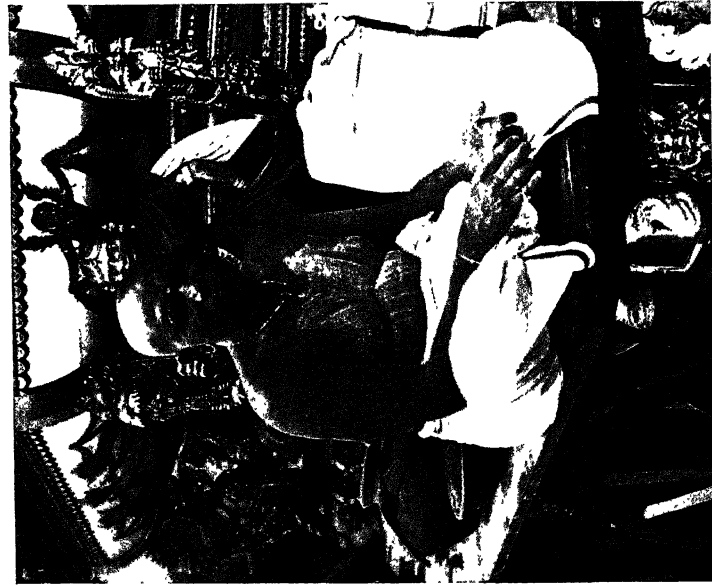
87 A Burning Ghat, Calcutta



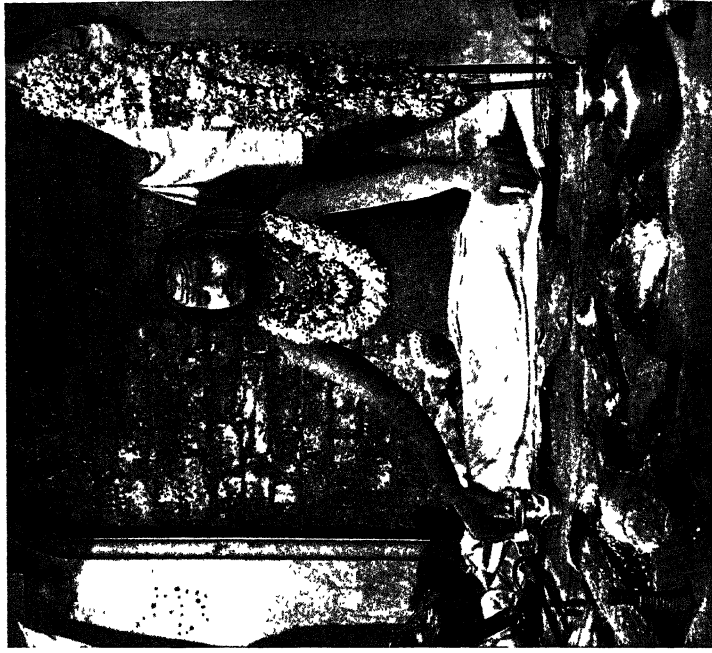
88 Bathing in the Ganges



89 Low Caste Hindu Beggars



90 Siva Temple Priest



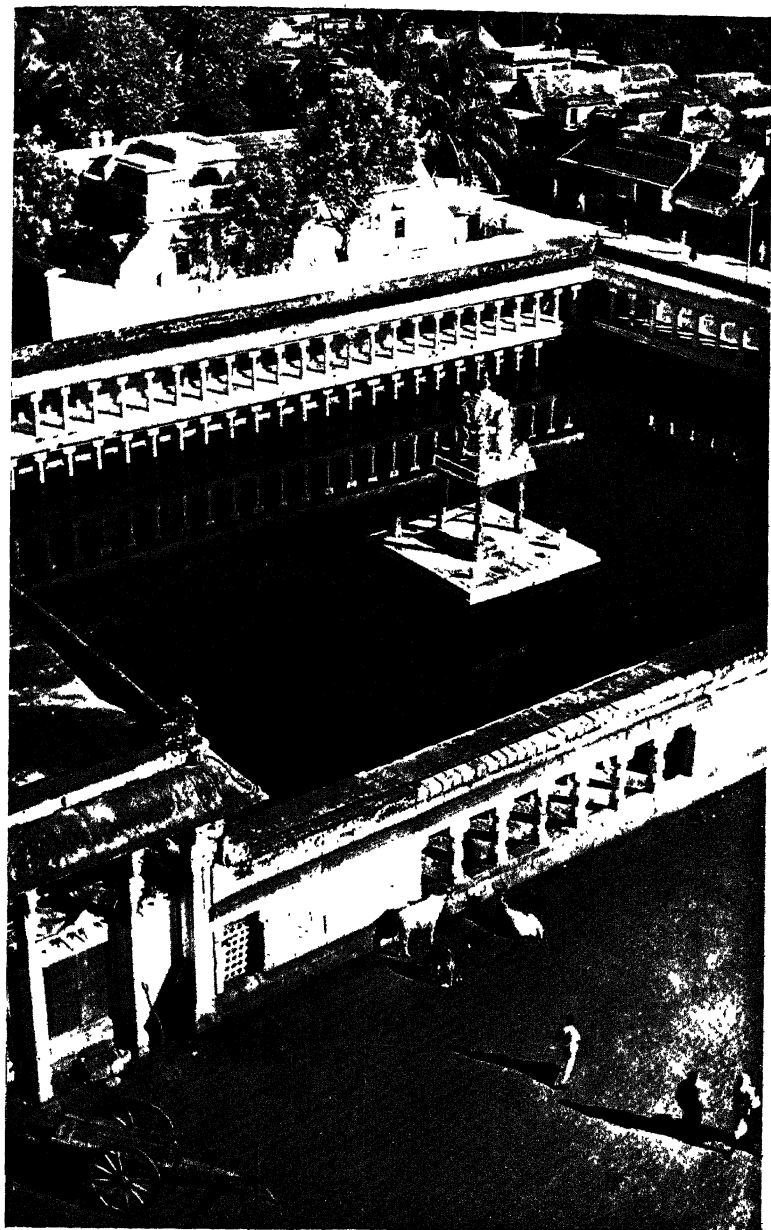
91 A Mystic in Dibrugah

were largely the fruits of the Aryan ideas of transmigration and Karma. Aryan thought had been led by its very nature to regard men's actions on this earth as having a certain value; good is rewarded and evil punished. This is known as Karma. The machinery of reward was transmigration. If a person did good work on this earth he came back again in a higher form of life; if he did not he was reborn to a lower. But he was always reborn; that was his doom; it was the functioning of Karma. The Upanishads addressed themselves to a philosophical explanation of Karma and its attendant conditions, and offered a way of escape from the relentless judgment of rebirth. Their teaching is too elaborate to be more than mentioned here, but they form the basis of Indian thought. To evade rebirth the human soul must reach by knowledge and contemplation the Supreme Soul, the "One without a Second." Thus, the chief end of man, according to the Aryan, is to mind not material things but to seek a knowledge of reality. Knowledge, indeed, lies at the root of his system of salvation.

The Hindu philosopher is fond of the phrase: "Thou art that." This means little until we become aware that Aryan thought identifies the human soul (*purusha*) with the One Reality (a kind of unconscious ecstasy). The only way the human soul can deliver itself from the estrangement of rebirth is to become like the One Reality, and thus be acceptable to it. Human nature, therefore, should be continually matching its own fretting littleness with Reality's peaceful greatness; by this means it will, with sincere and sustained study, attain a sufficient unworldliness to be taken from the world.

When the Aryans pushed their way down from the Himalayas on to the more fertile plains of India they had to conquer as they went. Scholars are not quite sure as to what people were the original occupants, but some contend that the Dravidians, whose descendants still people South India, were there before the Aryan conquest. What interests us particularly, however, is the fact that the Aryans found a

surprisingly high state of civilisation in the Indus valley. That this "Indus people" (for want of a better name) had a religious system is not to be doubted. We have little definite information as to its nature, but its influence on Hindu beliefs is presumed to have been considerable. Some of the present Indian gods are said to have had their origin in the Indus valley. Like most conquerors, the Aryans were thorough. They destroyed as much of the aboriginal religion and culture as possible. But religion and culture are more subtle militants than soldiers. They frequently conquer without being recognised as other than social conveniences. This is what certain aspects of the religion and culture of the "Indus people" did. The Aryans could destroy their images and make slaves of those who worshipped them, but they could not prevent themselves from realising that the people whom they had defeated had much to offer in the way of iconography and cultural method. Only commendation can attach to the Aryans for thus absorbing what was worthy in the system of their enemies. No civilisation is wholly pure. Man compiles as well as creates. The people that is too proud to borrow what it admires in another nation seals its own doom. Thus when we turn from Indian philosophy to Indian religion we find that the Hindu pantheon is largely an assortment of gods, some of whom only are indigenous. Brahma, Siva and Vishnu are the three outstanding. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer. From this trinity the Aryan pantheon expands beyond imagining, the whole range of human needs being represented. Certain districts appear to favour the propitiation of one god; another another, while seasonal changes in ceremonial are very marked. Brahma is not a mere detached creator. He is the principle of life; in him are all things contained and expressed. He is the Real and, therefore, the desirable. Against his majestic truth and purity the world struts in an ugly act of sham and ignorance. The wise and good appraise him aright; only the weak and foolish are deluded by life's tawdry pleasures



92 The Colonnaded Lake of the Tambukeshwana Temple, Srirangam





93 Statue of a Sacred Bull, Mysore

Siva is usually associated with the more grim and terrifying elements in the Indian's religion. The demons sometimes play havoc with men's peace of mind and then Siva is invoked. Vishnu, on the contrary, is regarded as capable of influencing those serener and more engaging powers which preside over human welfare. That is natural when we remember that he is a development of the Sun-god of the Vedic or earlier period of Aryan history. I refuse to expand this chapter unnecessarily by following the numerous other gods and goddesses, particularly as they, in my opinion, make very little real contribution to the essential qualities of Indian religious thought.

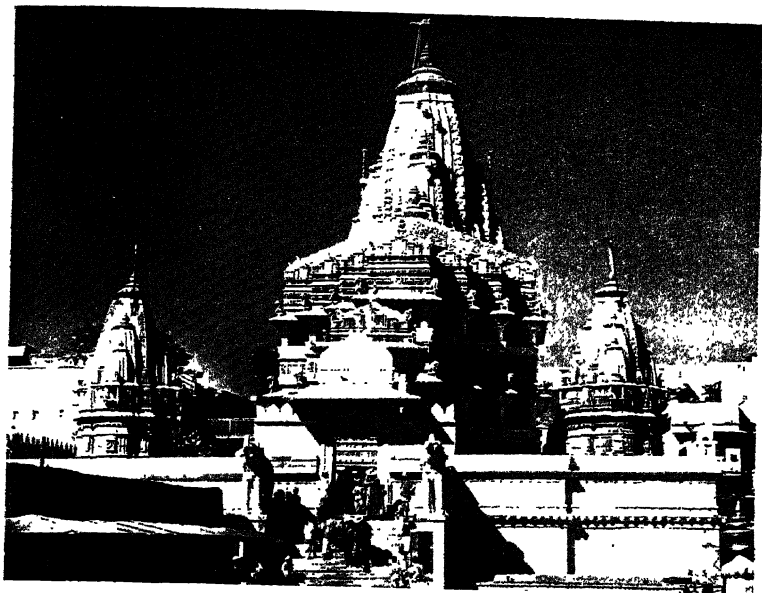
As soon as we admit pantheistic tendencies in Hinduism we have conceded all that is necessary for a brief impression of its qualities. The essential thing to remember about the old orthodox Hinduism is that it was a religion of knowledge. No miraculous act by God or supernatural abrogation of a law of nature could save men from the disabilities of earth; man, indeed, was his own saviour. He had to study to know; he had to know to escape. The Reality behind nature was an "unanswering stillness," qualityless and formless. Man had first to realise this and then to melt himself into it as light might melt itself into the sun. Endeavour was of no avail unless it was the endeavour to know and to be engulfed by that knowing. That is why there is about the average Indian even to-day a curious air of abstraction; his spirit seems to have a more universal quality than that of the Westerner; it is more conscious of the endless, timeless nature of Reality and of the valueless, trifling nature of this world. Despite the multitude of gods and goddesses which may be said to represent but local phases of a general and all-pervading principle, the Aryan mind is splendidly controlled by the fundamental illusion of human experience and the uncreated eternalness of the Reality with which he seeks blissful absorption. The way of his triumph is not a human way; to tread it requires not faculties of mind and body so much as, first, an attitude

of spirit and then a complete surrender of that attitude of spirit—a kind of contemplative osmosis by which when nothing earthly is left of him he is accepted as light is by greater light.

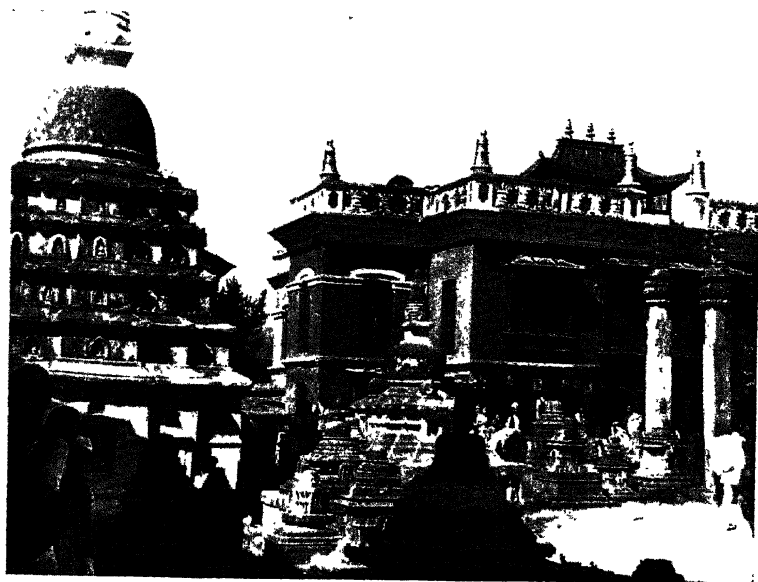
Such splendid exaltism, however, cannot be expected to cover the whole religious experience of man, and, as the Hindus are as human as the rest of us, it does not surprise to discover that in later developments of Hinduism different engagements of thought appear. One of these is the Bhakti movement. This movement is, to my mind, one of the most absorbing in the history of any religion. It is a revolt against the cold, desolate, impersonal attitude of the Upanishad Hinduism. Men are flesh and blood, not mere contemplative disciplinarians; they need warmth and love as well as truth and reality. And so we have the Bhakti poets bursting into lyrical revolt against the old Vedantic colourlessness. They demand a god to love; a theism that will make religion a thing of beauty and ecstasy. No man can love an abstraction; only misery and hopelessness emanate from the principle of non-life. The goodness at the heart of things craves to love men and that men should love it in return.

The movement was a shock to orthodox Hinduism. It was particularly strong in South, or Tamil, India where there arose a great volume of devotional classics written by men of deep religious instincts rather than of learning. Such works were known as the "Tamil Veda." The two greatest poets of the movement were Namdev and Tudaram, although there were many more of almost equal distinction. Ecstasy, joy, the excesses of spiritual love and a furious lyrical attachment to God are the manifestations of the Bhakti outburst, and many famous Indians, including Mr. Gandhi, owe much to its warming and elevating vigour. The Rev. C. F. Andrews himself is not insensitive to its bewitching sincerity, and to the present day its songs are sung with sweetening and uplifting effects.

It was a long time, however, before Hinduism could

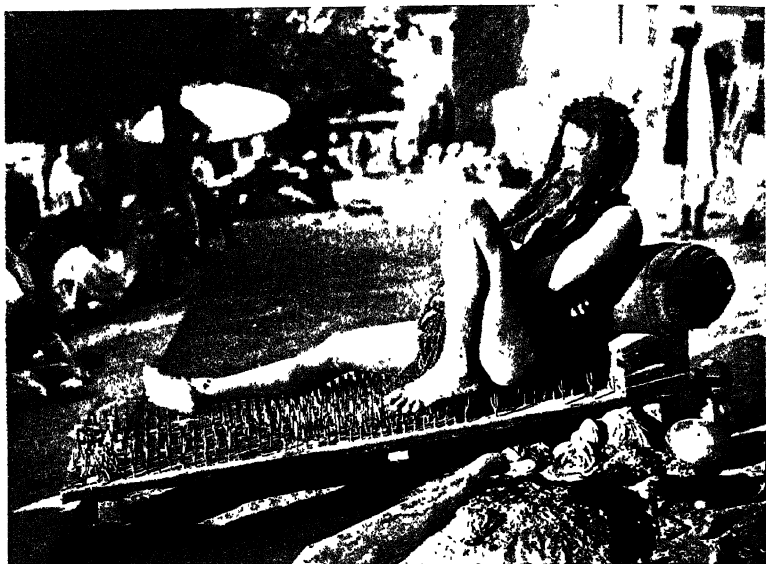


94 A Characteristic Hindu Temple



95 A Shrine in Nepal

SHRINES AND TEMPLES



96 Fakir indulging in self-purification



97 A follower of the Yogi Faith

take such an impulsive child to her classic bosom. Much redesigning of philosophic carpentry was necessary, but at length the process was complete, and Hinduism, with characteristic adaptability, absorbed the Bhakti movement as it has done others of less dynamic but more intellectual qualities.

Perhaps the most subtle of Hinduism's enemies is the West's idea of social service. This, of course, has reached it through the British connection with India. The West has as much interest in men's bodies as in their souls; social inequalities are enquired into and remedies which, if they do nothing else, make men socially worthy of taxation are evolved. The East has had no interest in the human body. It looked on the human body, indeed, as an enemy to the "way of release." Consequently, when the West showed the East that making men happy in this world was not necessarily consistent with making them unhappy in the next the Hindu thinkers were again upset. They are still upset. Many of them have started new efforts on behalf of their old, static faith, seeking to embody the West's idea that social service should be the concern of all great religions.

I shall deal only with two of these efforts here. The first is that expressed in a whole series of bodies, each of which is termed a "Samaj." The Samaj movement is not urgently concerned with social amelioration; its inspiration has come from Christianity. It would be the last to admit this, but its theistic aspiration was without doubt the result of Hinduism rubbing shoulders with missionary workers from the West. The Samaj, generally speaking, desires to replace the "unanswering stillness" of the older conceptions of reality with a thoroughgoing theism. It is true to Hinduism, but it stresses one aspect of it more than has ever been done in the past.

The second may be represented by the Ramakrishna Mission so deservedly respected throughout India. This is a movement of man to help man. It frankly avows that "the first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen"

(Swami Vivekananda). Of this mission it was said that it "put the Vedanta on horseback." To it all men of whatever race or religion should be helped to combat pain, disease and disaster. Throughout India and Burma it has established hospitals which are doing outstanding work, and no flood or earthquake brings sorrow and death to any part of the land without the solicitous attention of a body of zealous and disinterested workers.

And so Hinduism in these modern days is grappling with its own mediaevalism. It is like Thomas Aquinas trying to be an anti-fundamentalist. That it is finding modernity an uncomfortable associate cannot be doubted. Hinduism, indeed, was not built for these fussy and feverish days. Its very essence is a brooding quiet; it looks with weariness on human effort, and the piling up of a bland worldly comfort must fill it with dismay. In the past, however, it has overcome many internal inconsistencies, and we need not despair of its reconciling the palpitating heart of the social reformer to its own vast, cold wisdom. It is most likely to do so by merely waiting. Its wisdom was there before the world knew the meaning of modernity; it may be there when the last reforming breath has been drawn.

### *Mohammedanism*

A second Indian religion, Mohammedanism, must briefly be noted here. It came with the Islamic invasions of India from the year A.D. 1001. These invasions were by way of the North-West Frontier from the central plains of Asia. There had, it is true, been an infiltration of Islamic influences some three centuries earlier, when Sind was dominated, but Hinduism had almost succeeded in swallowing this extraneous pebble when the sword of Islam was wielded so successfully against the Aryans that in 1193 an Afghan ruler set up his government at Delhi. That was the beginning of a religious antagonism which has caused India much perturbation to the present day. Whatever may be said of the religion of Islam

it knows its own mind. In India it has refused any accommodation with Hinduism. There may be those who believe that this was the result of safeguarding numbers rather than of creedal constancy, and they may point to the Hinduised Mohammedanism of Sind as proof; but the radical differences in the two religions make a synthesis highly unlikely. Islam is grimly simple; Hinduism sternly complex. Islam is a monotheistic religion believing in Mohammed as the prophet of God (or Allah) and not very far removed in general structure from Christianity. Could we expect it to soar on philosophic wings to the stirless regions of Upanishad reality? Mohammedanism believes in keeping its feet firmly and consistently on earth; its scheme of salvation is belief; it does not scale the sky for apodictic judgments or comb experience for a guide to wisdom. It accepts on trust the word of its Prophet; it is a thoroughgoing empiricist for whom the finer processes of reasoning are an unnecessary dilettantism. Indeed, this comfortable acceptance of life as a simple compound of itself is portrayed in the average Mohammedan. I have many good friends among the Mohammedans, but I never fail to discover among them their spiritual separation from the Hindus. Once I attended in Calcutta a debate between representatives of Mohammedanism and Hinduism. There could be no questioning the superior mental agility of the Hindus; they could think round a situation almost as soon as it had been outlined; weaknesses in opposing statements were hunted down with unerring instinct; new branches of argument grew from enemy-blasted trees with the magic of an Aaron's rod. And they delighted in the process; it was evidently congenial to them. This is especially true of the Bengalis who claim to lead the cultural thought of India. The Mohammedans, on the other hand, were idea-bound and lacking in adaptability. They stated their case dourly and none too clearly. Words and phrases were not at their command. When they tried to shift their mental position the furniture of their defence was in disarray. However unassailable their arguments might be,



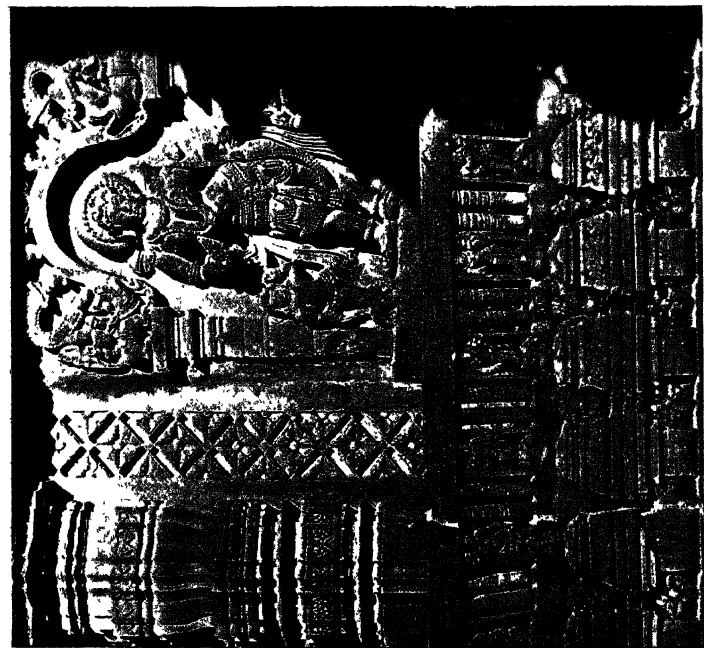
they could not weaponise their strength. Nevertheless, one felt their sterling qualities. They were the grave, wordless hills; the Bengalis the subtle and ever changing clouds.

Mohammedanism in India has been given a responsibility that has not fallen to it in many other countries. It has met Western influences and has had to battle continually against the Suddhi (conversion) operations of the Brahmans, and its share in the government of the country has been by no means meagre. From 1193 to 1858 the Mohammedans ruled at Delhi. During that long period both the extent and quality of their dominion varied. At first it was masterful and even cruel. The opposing religion was put down with a vigour that knew no mercy. Perhaps this was necessary. At any rate, it is a method that has not been neglected by many other conquerors about whose actions less has been said. Later, the Mohammedan attitude to the religion of the Brahmans softened. Under Akbar, one of the most enlightened of Muslim rulers, a bold policy of reconciliation was launched. Unfortunately for the peace of the land, it was unsuccessful. Akbar saw to it that Hindus were given as much political grace and religious freedom as the Mohammedans. But, as has already been indicated, the two religions won't mix. As well try to reconcile poetry with geometry. Without fundamental abrogations the two must remain apart, not necessarily in conflict, but as representing two completely differing religious standpoints.

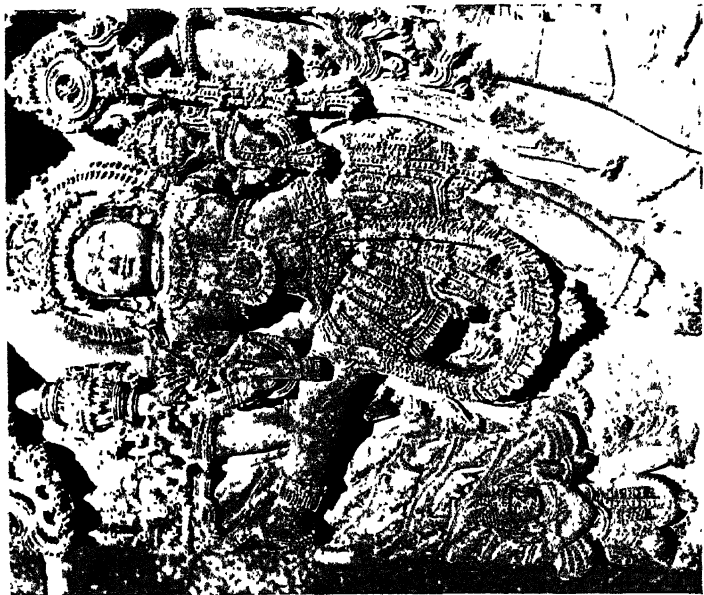
Since Akbar's day there have been weaker but no less sincere efforts to combine Mohammedanism and Hinduism. A notable instance was when Mr. Gandhi was astute enough to make use of the Mohammedan resentment regarding the Allies' treatment of Turkey at the close of the Great War. He joined forces with the Mohammedans on condition that they marched under the self-government-for-India banner. The alliance was that of a Gothic arch with a barn lintel. Gandhi was as enthusiastic about the Caliph as he was about ducks eggs in Dunedin. Nor was the Mohammedan heart warm



98 A Mohammedan Boy dressed for the Temple



99 On a Jain Temple



100 Dancing Goddess

TEMPLE SCULPTURE

about political independence for India. The Mohammedan had ruled India for many years; he would not mind ruling it again, but to share power with the Hindu is to him like sharing the same dressing for a common wound. The Mohammedan may not be agile of mind but he is stout of principle. Any attempt to lure him into a religious partnership with Hinduism is met with a stolid trust in an unchanging Allah. He says "no" in a loud voice even when he cannot justify it.

No religion, however, is an unexpanding rod. Iron cannot be bent without the transfiguration of heat; neither can a religious doctrine. But the influences of environment are such that trees transplanted from their native clime change in very delicate modifications. A religion does the same. The Christianity of Britain is not the Christianity of Central Africa; the Buddhism of Burma has difficulty in shaking hands with the Buddhism of Tibet. Thus is the Mohammedanism of India either purer or not so pure as the Mohammedanism of, say, Turkey. Chemical and climatic influences have been at work. I consider the Mohammedan of India as more self-reliant than his confrere in other lands. That it should be so is possibly natural. India has tested Mohammedanism. Ranged alongside a powerful Hinduism and a colonising Westernism she has had to gird up her loins. While maintaining the faith pure and undefiled in all its essentials she has adapted herself to new subtleties, many of them dangerous, with a mental sturdiness which deserves generous admiration.

Mohammedanism's present grief is an earthly home. Turkey is the last autonomous country left to Islam; should she fall to the infidel the faith will be a landless outcast. It is no comfort to her that the Jews have been landless for centuries. Islam has never distinguished spiritual power from temporal. She feels that half her members are not functioning when she has to submit to the earthly power of a foreign faith. She has trust in British rule, but not in British democracy. The new constitution in India has given her a just proportion of power; but it is an ephemeral process this, depending on votes and

the accommodation of elusive parties. Mohammedanism is uncomfortable under it; power, she believes, should be identical with faith. Faith, indeed, is power to Mohammedanism, and she may be excused for looking towards the future with a heart heavy with anxiety. She has no caste system, and is, therefore, not subject to the weakness of social stratification. Divisions she has, but they are all blessed by the same untroubled unity. Mohammedanism does not partake of the modern sin of self-rationalisation. That has caused the death of many religious speculations. It has almost completed the grave of Christianity. Mohammedanism has faith enough to be healthy in the face of an age so blind as to confuse the human soul with the human reason.

### *Jainism*

Jainism, although not widely popular in India, still has what seems to be a permanent place in Indian religious thought. It is not so clearly cut in opposition to Hinduism as Mohammedanism. At the same time, it is in opposition. It accepts transmigration and Karma. These two concepts appear to be as inevitably allied with Aryan thought as form is with design. Both Hinduism and Jainism have graven on them the word "Karma." Where they differ is in regard to its nature and the method of its defeat. Hinduism says "surrender to non-action; the knowledge of how to be non-active is life's most precious acquisition." Jainism says: "Practise asceticism; burn out the impurities of Karma and thou shalt be free."

Thus does Hinduism declare that Karma can be killed by its opposite, while Jainism is equally sure that man's works are capable of its destruction.

The Jainas are very definite about the nature of Karma. They say that it is the dust of the world on what could be a pure and clean thing, the human soul. Past incarnations may have made the dust a hard, crust-like substance, but it is capable of solvency by the ascetic life. The soul (*jiva*) is

trapped like a frail and beautiful insect by the sordid weight of worldly sediment. Karma piles layer upon layer on it; it becomes a complete and hopeless prisoner unless action is taken to release it. The Vedantic doctrine of doing nothing is sheer defeatism. Man must be his own deliverer. Jainism says: "Man, thou art thy own friend; thy soul is its own river Veyarana."

It is this utter dependence on individual effort for salvation which has made Jainism disdain priesthood. The ceremonial part of their religion is largely performed by worshippers undistinguished by special qualifications. To possess the true faith and to know the law is, however, a more valuable asset than faithful ceremonial, says Jainism.

The Jainas have no god. They may deny that they are atheists but their worship is confined to the Tirthakara (prophet). To them there is no supreme deity; no creator of the world, no destroyer of it. Their worship is merely an exercise in purification; it is not directed towards appeasement or the securing of a reward since there is nothing to appease and just as little to give reward. The expounders of their law are to be revered, but there is no divine being to commune with. There is a classification of such expounders or saints; they form a kind of hierarchy surrounding and inspiring man's efforts to save himself from the tyranny of rebirth; they do not, however, have the power of mercy or its opposite; they are, at their best, merely enlightened ones who have tested the Jainas' doctrine and found it effective in securing their own deliverance. To the Jain, therefore, the human soul is left as its own maker or non-maker.

Since asceticism is the main means of salvation for the Jainas it is natural that we should expect their moral code to be severe. Few, however, can readily realise just how severe and Karma-eroding it is. It is true that more laxity is allowed to the non-monks than to the monks, but the non-monks are regarded as in a state of preparation for monkhood and must in fact carry out at some time or other in their repeated

rebirths the austerities of monkhood before their release is assured. The five necessary vows of monkhood are: (1) no destroying of life; (2) no untruth; (3) no stealing; (4) no sexual intercourse; (5) no worldly possessions. Such undertakings are perhaps common to all monkhood, but it is the spirit in which they are interpreted which makes Jainism one of the purest and most exalted religious disciplines in the world. Take the first. The Jaina monk, unlike the Christian, is not content to regard all life as human life. He must refrain not alone from killing his kind but also from killing any animal or thing which has in it the principle of life. If the Jaina monk steps on an insect on his way to breakfast he is guilty unless he has taken due care to prevent such an accident; stealing to the Christian is taking what does not belong to him; to the Jaina monk it is taking what is not offered to him. All desire is forbidden. Life must be a continual and conscious cauterisation of itself. Even the desire to abandon life is sin. Thus is Jainism not an encourager of suicide.

We may regard such deep-striking ethical roots as impossible in a practical world, but those who are fond of logical conclusions must see that Jainism is guilty only of thoroughness. It does not declare sinless living to be necessary and unnecessary at the same time, as many moral philosophies do. Life in its practical evidences defeats human reason, and that it does so is perhaps the clearest indictment of human pride.

### *Sikhism*

In the Golden Temple at Amritsar, a town of the Punjab, there lies a sacred book over which a stout guardian waves continuously a *chauri*, which in India is the symbol of princeliness. This book is called the "Granth," and it contains the sacred literature of the Sikhs. In defence of it the Sikhs would face the world sword in hand. This martial race, indeed, links its religion with its military prowess as consciously and as effectively as did the legendary Scandinavians. In peace they are relatively miserable; only in war are

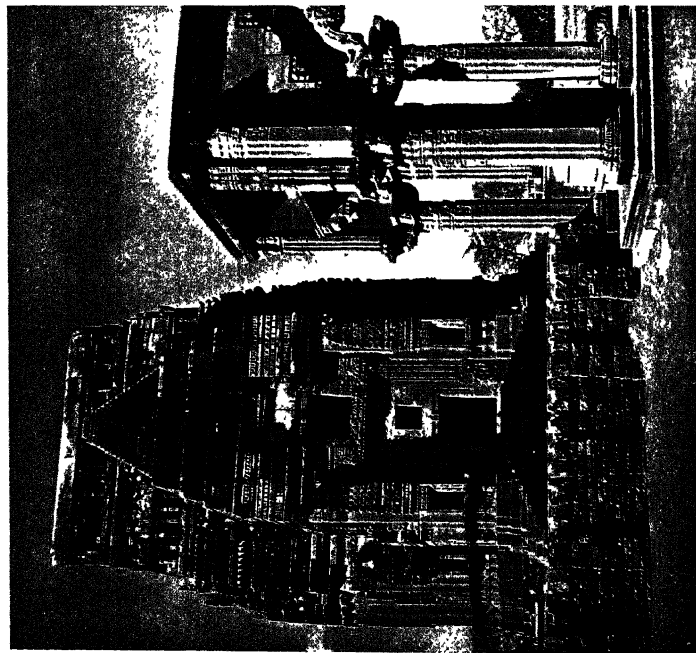


101 Brahministic Figure

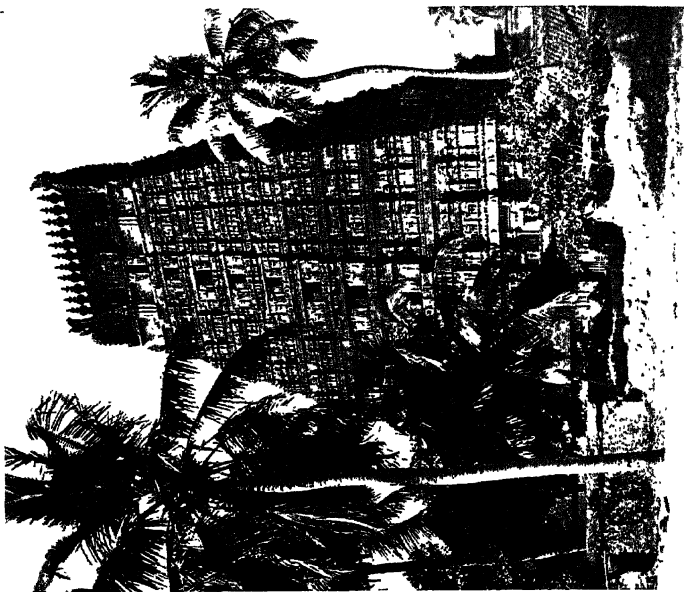


102 Buddha





103 Teli-Ka-Mandir, Gwalior



104 Conjeeveram

# DRAVIDIAN TEMPLES

they grand and mighty. The grind of modern industrial conditions is to them a more powerful enemy than ever crossed the arid hills of the North-West Frontier. They love their religion; they love their land; for either they would die to a man. And yet when we examine their religion it displays a charming vagueness. Nobody can say whether the Sikh has a god; whether he is a theist or merely a Bhakti emotionalist. The Granth is a collection of religious songs chosen apparently for their personal fervour and sincerity. But it has no creed and no cosmogony. There are definite instructions to Sikhs in odd corners of their literature, but doctrine in the accepted sense appears to the Sikh to be an irrelevant exactitude.

We are told somewhere that the "guru" or teacher is the main personal reverence of Sikhism; the whole drift of Sikh worship, however, points to a shadowy personal god. The fact that the Granth is mainly a collection of Bhakti poems adds strength to this idea, since the Bhakti movement was a movement of love and devotion, and we cannot have love and devotion merely for a Punjab sunset, however beautiful.

The founder of the Sikh religion was Guru Nanak, born in 1469. He was a reformer of old rather than a builder of new systems. His inspiration, indeed, came from a whole series of assaults on Hinduism which took place between the 14th and the 16th centuries. The Aryan system was becoming mechanical and priest-ridden. Its philosophical transcendence was being treated as fatalism; men were bowing under its stark hopelessness; the way of release from Karma could not be trod by ordinary mortals, trust in idolatry and the painted image had degenerated from an exhausted compromise to an inexorable doom. Reform was needed. Prophets of hope were sighed for by thousands of faded spirits. Hinduism's fires were still warm, but they were greyed and ashen; men thought them dead.

Into this frozen waste came the dazzling and radiant figure of Kabir. He is one of the most arresting personalities in

Indian religious history. From his lips flowed grace, warmth, humanity. The dread caverns of a gloomy Hinduism were to him as far removed from the Aryan's true feelings as the twilight of the gods from the birth of Venus. He wanted men to live and love, not to moan and despair. And so he preached a power that smiled on all human hopelessness. Fatalism was never meant to grip and chill the heart of man. Religion was but a bright, joyous loving; a complete devotion to a god that yearned to aid and to bless. Kabir's pen aided his preaching. He had half of India at his feet.

One of his most ardent disciples was Nanak. It is not known whether Nanak ever met Kabir in the flesh, but certainly the influence of the latter on the founder of the Sikh religion was beneficially permanent.

Perhaps it never entered Nanak's head to form a new religion. All he wanted to do was to spread the vitality and sincerity of Kabir's new Hinduism. But there were subtle differences in the two men. Kabir was the compelling visionary; Nanak the serious Puritan. The one desired a joyous love; the other a deep, earnest faithfulness. Both were averse to the outworn Brahmanism of their day, but while Kabir wished to put in its place purity, love and devotion to a personal god, Nanak was more interested in arming men against sloth, indifference and insincerity. The founder of Sikhism had an idea of a personal god, but he was more an Amos than an Isaiah. His god was less genial and possibly more shadowy than that of Kabir, although the profundity of his zeal was unmatched by any other.

Kabir's reformed sects grew; so did those of Nanak; but, while after his death Kabir's followers gradually sank back into the apathy of a non-active Brahmanism, Nanak's continued to grow in difference from Hinduism until they discovered themselves to be a brand-new religion.

Such being its origin it is not surprising to find that Sikhism retains the fundamentals of Hinduism. It believes in Karma and rebirth. The fact that one of the songs which make up

the Granth is culled from Mohammedan sources proclaims its original impartiality; it theoretically discards the caste system, but those who know India are aware of how difficult it is to cut from Hindu traditions a trait that has coloured them for centuries.

Perhaps the most striking outward fact about a Sikh is that he does not shave or cut his hair. Frequently, he is a magnificent specimen of a man, tall, lithe, keen-eyed. When added to this are a long flowing beard and woman-like locks, his appearance is not unworthy of being called picturesque. Sikhs are supposed to confine themselves to certain kind of work, but this rule does not seem to be taken very seriously. They worship "one invisible god," they honour their gurus (there are ten of them) but revere and bow before the Granth; they bathe frequently in the sacred pool of Amritsar and extol the name and function of a soldier.

Such is an outline of the Sikh's creed if it can be so called. That he is a brave and honourable gentleman cannot be doubted; that he has much religious clarity beyond a strong militant regard for the Granth may be.

### *Western Influence*

There are other religions in India. There is, for instance, Zoroastrianism. Christianity is but a tiny fly on the great elephantine back of India. It has, however, had a vast cultural success. What it has not conquered it has influenced. There are also snatches of the Chinaman's faith and Japanese Shintuism; Jewish rigidity and Greek laxity. Around the Himalayan foothills and here and there like an unrecognised fossil you will find a broken and corrupted Buddhism; while active as hot-weather ants and as sincere as they are active are a tiny sect calling themselves Bahais. Their religion is of Persian origin, but it throws a gentle mantle of friendship around all other systems and has an ethical philosophy of winning ways.

But none of these can be called an Indian religion. We

have a faithful band of Buddhists in England, but British exactitude would be gravely shocked if we treated Buddhism as an English faith. What must be noted, however, is that all religions in India are in a state of unprecedented agitation. The modern ferment is at their doors. Beliefs that have weathered life for a thousand years are fissured in disintegration. Western science may have clarified our material circumstance but it has plunged our spiritual affairs into darkness and confusion. We in the West are a stolid people. Many of us have turned God into a political theorem; some of us have even made Him a dictator. We can do so without tearing logic up by the roots because we believe that logic has no right to be logic unless it can turn and rend itself. But the East is different. It has never been logical and, therefore, it respects logic. It has been wise enough to regard truth as beyond the sophistries of man, and therefore, when man chews up truth as a jackal chews up a pullet's leg the East is revolted. It is revolted now. It sees Christianity as a lame duck in a devil's garden being fed on scraps of convenience, and wonders when it will be forced to do the same thing with Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Jainism and Sikhism. The East is too naive to see that a religion that is reasonable is a religion that is essentially unreasonable, since man's reason is about as perfect as his morality; and so it becomes quite ashamed when you tell it that there are no signs of God in the Pleiades or in the pineal gland. That the world has been made by Ganges silt and Thames mud instead of by lovely and exalted concepts is to it a degrading discovery; but what can the poor East do when reason is on the side of the victorious West? The West has declared that God is reason; God, therefore, must be making a new revelation. Thus are Eastern religions trembling; they are like nervous sheep with dogs everywhere.



105 MADURA

The Great Temple silhouetted against the evening sky



106 Grinding Corn



107 A Hindu Marriage. Note the Elephant Images on the Roof  
VILLAGE ACTIVITIES

## CHAPTER VI

### VILLAGE PROBLEMS

VILLAGE life is the backbone of India. Nearly 90 per cent of her people are villagers. The cities in India count for little unless it be for their shrines or temples or mosques. Anything, therefore, that affects village life in India is important. At present there are many problems awaiting solution in the Indian village. Under a true Hindu civilisation such problems could not exist. But India is no more a true Hindu civilisation than we are a true Christian civilisation. The villager, therefore, is in a bad economic way. His great grief is his poverty. Many villagers owe more than they can ever hope to repay. Their indebtedness is gigantic. There are several reasons for this. The first is the Hindu abhorrence of an old maid. Rather than see its daughters face an unmarried life a Hindu family will tie a millstone of debt round its neck for centuries. It will buy its daughters husbands even if it has to borrow every anna. Husbands, however, are often expensive purchases, and the caste system encourages them to be so. The amount of the family's indebtedness is thus frequently very great. And it is rendered greater still by the Indian moneylender. He is a gentleman, but a business gentleman. He will lend money with the utmost pleasure, at a price. His price is often as high as 40 or 50 per cent interest. And when the position is examined he cannot be blamed. The poor villager can offer him small security should he die with his loan unpaid. Only his land and his health stand between the villager and want. His loan is frequently more than the value of his land. And so the moneylender protects himself by an enhanced interest.

Another source of village poverty is the curious inheritance system in vogue in rural India. If a *ryot* (cultivator) dies he usually divides his land among his sons; when the sons in

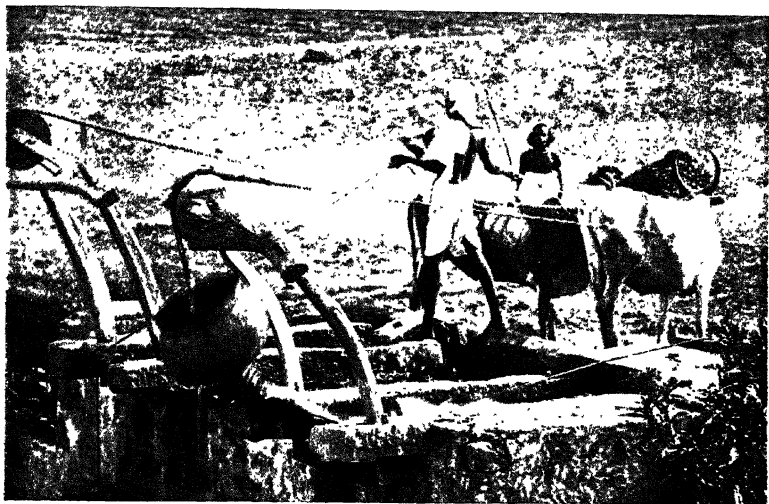


their turn come to die they also divide their land so that each male offspring can have an independent status. Thus does the original holding become less and less until it cannot support a family. This is known as fragmentation, and is a problem to which the Government has addressed itself for some time without success.

There are also a villager's religious susceptibilities. He is usually a Hindu, and a Hindu's reverence for certain forms of life is well known. The cow is specially sacred. In all Hindu cities the cow can wander about the busiest streets obstructing traffic and diverting pedestrians with the utmost freedom. She can even lie on the pavement or across a thronged bazaar. People feed her with pride in their hearts. No Hindu shopkeeper will refuse a cow her breakfast should she visit him with an empty stomach. This is all very beautiful, but it is a heavy burden in a materialistic world. It has been calculated that the maintenance of wandering cows and other animals of a relatively uneconomic nature costs India 176 crores of rupees every year, or four times as much as she receives from her land-tax system.

And what can we say about the villager's unworldly outlook? Being a Hindu he regards riches, either in money or in goods, as soilers of the human soul. He despises them not for what they are but for what they can do. Useful they may be, but only in leading him to the wrath of Kali or the displeasure of Siva. The average villager, therefore, is improvident. He cares not for the morrow. To him a rainy day is but a test of his ability to progress in unworldliness; he hails it as a rift in the clouds of Karma. Is it surprising that such people are poor?

The Government of India has been blamed for allowing the villagers to be poor. It is surprising that the Government of India has not been blamed for the blue of the sky. Now that we have Congress in power in several provinces of India either this problem will have to be tackled or the blame shifted to the constitutional shoulders of the governors. Whatever



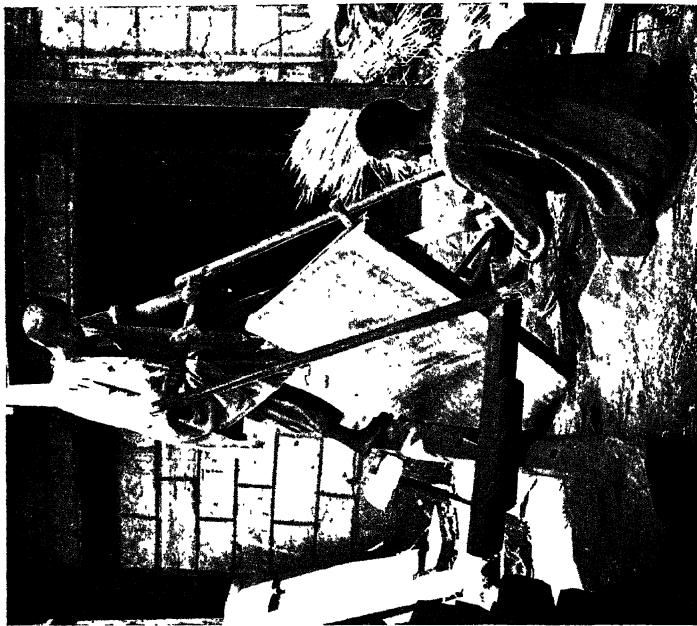
108 Primitive Irrigation



109 A Jat Cart  
OXEN AT WORK



110 Rug-weaving



111 Carpentry

VILLAGE CRAFTS

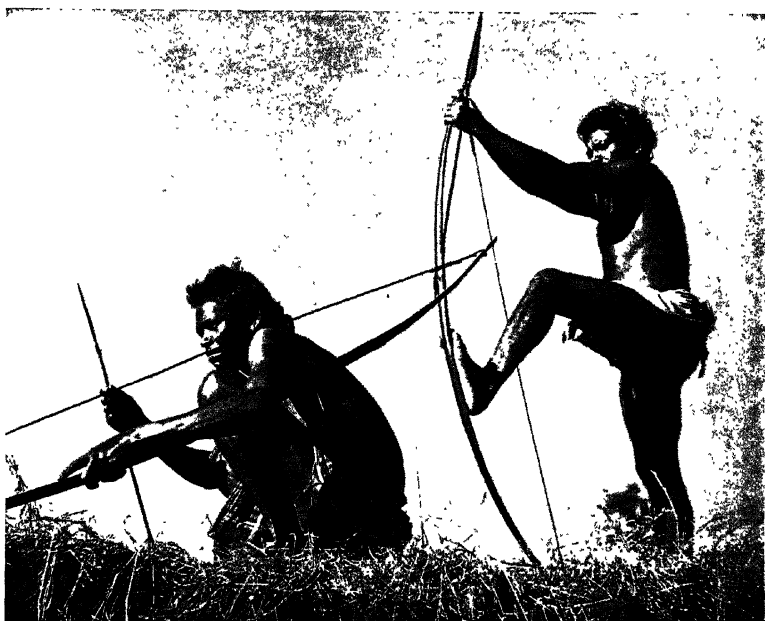
happens Indian village problems are caused largely by a contradiction in ethical creeds. To solve them we must adapt either the modern world to Hinduism or Hinduism to the modern world. In this direction I believe much could be done through the village headmen. These are a trusted race who have been given great powers in village life because of their influence over their fellow countrymen. If the Indian villager is to deal with a materialistic environment he must have guidance. The Government tried to give him guidance in the form of co-operative banks. He regarded them as a Brahmanistic providence rather than as business institutions. Thus when the banks demanded a return of loans he was horrified. So horrified was he that he went back to the Indian moneylender. The Indian moneylender had the decency to charge him a higher interest and a lower rate of return. Besides, the moneylender was a man, a human being. This Government bank was only a building with an unaccommodating creature behind the counter. You could reason with a man; you could tell him that your crops were bad or that your wife had had the measles. The Government bank cared not a chew of betel either about your bad crops or your measled wife. All it cared about was that the villager owed it money and that that money had to be paid.

The villager is a simple soul. He does not understand business; his ideas on the source and uses of money are, when they exist, novel in the extreme. A system is about as much good to him as an abstract noun to a hungry bullock. He needs the human touch; every village needs a father. Work on the land under an Indian sun breaks a man's physique; it makes him weary and spent. At the day's end he craves rest, an untroubled, log-like rest. All over India the cultivator suffers from the same bodily weariness. The fierce sun and unfriendly earth: with these he wrestles from sunrise to sundown. Is it human to expect him to master the details of a stupid perfection in finance? Rest, comfort and a soothing friend; the crooning song and the simple evening meal. Such

are the needs of the Indian villager. If he has to sustain a system of economics it must be with the aid of one whom he knows and trusts. He has such in the village headman. Wise legislation could make this man a power for good in the economic amelioration of rural India.



112 The Chief's House, Naga Hills, Assam



113 Bhil Archers



## CHAPTER VII

## THE CASTE SYSTEM AND ITS ABOLITION

I AM a believer in the Indian caste system, just as I am a believer in Christianity, not because of its abuses but because of its uses. Caste in India is a divine institution made human. So is Christianity. The caste system has not been abused more than Christianity; but it has been abused. With its abuses nobody can agree. The four castes or "Vernas" of the Hindu social system are Brahmans, or priests and scholars; the Kshattriyas, military or governing class; the Vaisyas, traders and farmers; the Sudras, menials, labourers and industrial workers. All the Indian castes excepting the Sudras have a spiritual as well as a material dispensation. They are twice born. Each of their members is entitled to wear the sacred thread after he or she has come of age. The Brahmans have a cotton thread; the Kshattriyas a hemp or flax thread; the Vaisyas a woollen thread. No thread for the Sudras. They are only once born. They have a kind of spiritual life of their own, but it is nourished through different channels. Outside the four castes is a world of barbarians. For them there is no status excepting that of the animal. They defile the earth as outcasts and are to the Hindus what the Scythians were to the Greeks.

But the four divisions I have mentioned have undergone numberless subdivisions. These are usually called "jats," and the complexity of Hindu society is caused by the network of rules and tabus about eating, bathing, occupation, etc., which applies to every stratum. Marriage, for instance, has a terrifying mass of regulative custom. In this connection three imposing words are used, viz. endogamy, exogamy and hypergamy. Endogamy means a system by which a man is forced to marry a woman of his own caste and dare not take to wife a female of any other caste; exogamy, on the other



hand, insists on a man marrying a woman of another caste, while hypergamy makes it imperative that a woman must take for her husband a man of superior caste to her own. She may be allowed under certain circumstances to marry a man who is only as good as herself, but this is not generally encouraged. There are over 2,000 tribes and sub-castes in India, each with its own system of tabus and marriage customs. The person who can master the details of such a situation is worthy of canonisation. Some castes are tribal in their constitution, but even they glory in subdivision.

The idea of exogamy arose from the fact that the Hindu system has such powers of absorption. There is no race and no religion that it cannot make its own. Thus when non-Hindus are made Hindus the males of the absorbed race must marry women of another caste. The purpose is clear. By this means the "foreign" blood is made to mix with the established Hindu stream. This was particularly the case where the aborigines were concerned. They were allowed to become once-born Indians provided their men married Hindu women. The despair of trying to understand the restrictive tangle of Hindu society lies in the fact that a caste may practise endogamy with regard to other castes and exogamy within itself. This is especially true of tribal castes. Some aboriginal castes, for instance, recognise totemistic divisions among themselves. Such divisions are called septs, each with its own totem, and the men of one sept cannot marry a woman unless she be of another sept. Animals or trees are usually the totemistic symbol of such aboriginal divisions. That is why a bean may be sacred to some Hindus and a dainty meal to others. In one district a junglecock can be but a creature with wings and feathers; in another it may have the divinity of an honoured shrine. Many tabus are obviously nothing more than common sense. A dead dog to some castlets is anathema. It is so to modern heroes of public health. Washing before partaking of food has its sanctions in ordinary hygienic practice, while the idea behind untouchability is

that, as the majority of the untouchables are labourers who do not bathe regularly, they are unclean and a danger to health.

Within the caste there are degrees of social importance, but only the members of that caste takes any notice of them. To the outside world a Brahman is a Brahman and a Vaisya a Vaisya no matter how he stands in relation to the caste's internal organisation. There is much wisdom in the law of certain castes to the effect that inbreeding should be disallowed. Gotra exogamy makes it impossible for a marriage to take place between a man and a woman descended from the same ancestral stock; Sapinda exogamy forbids relations to marry each other. Those who have observed the evils of such marriages in the West will applaud the social acumen of the East. Hypergamy has not been guiltless of social evil. It has caused a paucity of unmarried men and an overplus of unmarried women in the higher castes. This is inevitable. A Vaisya women, for instance, has the choice of men in the Kshatriya as well as in the Brahman caste; but a Kshatriya maiden is obviously more restricted in matrimonial possibilities. This evil gave rise to a low Brahman class who sell themselves or their sons as husbands to maidens of a lower caste. These are called Bikauwas. Their only punishment is that they are despised and rejected by the rest of their caste. The evil here is in regarding non-marriage as a stigma as far as Hindu high-caste women are concerned. For this certain rash reformers would abolish the caste system altogether. Surely all that is needed is a tiny adjustment. As well abolish Christianity because it allows people to go to the almshouse.

Caste and occupation usually work hand in hand, the trade or means of earning a living of a family being handed down from generation to generation. Perhaps this is why the followers of certain ancient occupations such as that of a goldsmith, a barber or a washerman often show such amazing skill. I have watched a street barber in India do things with his razor that could have been mistaken for magic, and those

who have seen Indian washermen (or *dhobis*) at work can testify to the remarkable dexterity of their operations. The *dhobis* are a very low caste because they handle soiled clothes. Their meekness, however, is very charming.

As may be imagined, caste regulations vary in different parts of such an extensive country. In South India caste is inexorable. Its rules are observed with an almost perfect faithfulness. In North India, however, almost the opposite condition prevails. Assam is outstandingly lax. She had a strong Mongolian ancestry among whom caste was unknown. In Kashmir and the North-West Frontier many sacred caste injunctions are not recognised, while in the Punjab's western territory tribal rather than caste considerations are important. Sind is largely Mohammedan in spirit, and its adherence to caste restrictions is very weak indeed.

Orissa is a curious exception. Here we have an island of caste in a sea of non-caste. The reason seems to be that Orissa, like the Basque mountains in Spain, defied modern developments until quite recently. The railway reached it only fifty years ago.

Nepal is Hindu to the core, and yet it allows the most liberal ideas to prevail regarding caste. On marriage, however, it is adamant. Here there is no shadow of laxity, wedding ceremonies being rigidly under the *Shastras* (ancient Hindu law books).

One of the most picturesque sub-castes is that of the *Bhats*. They are people who keep family trees. For a consideration they will explore families for generations and carefully record their researches even if the resultant tomes require a bullock cart to carry them. At births and marriages they are always present. In certain respects they are like the wandering minstrels who used to charm the Europe of a bygone age. They compose poems, and what is more, recite them. These poems are usually special creations to celebrate particular family events such as marriages, deaths, coming-of-age ceremonies, etc. It is a pity that this fascinating race of sycophants



115 A Rajah's Retainers



116 Hindu Girls



IN ORISSA

117 Worshippers leaving a Temple

are being overshadowed by more modern and less charming methods.

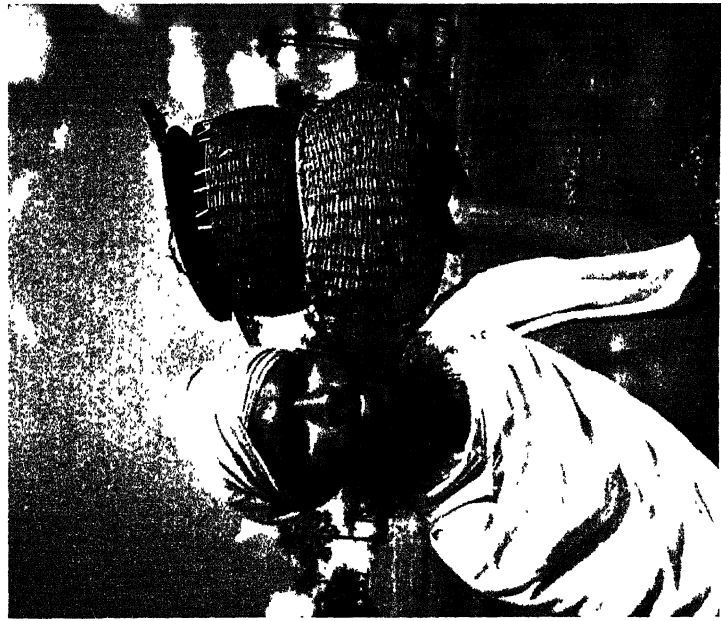
New sub-castes frequently originate with amazing inconsequence. During the famine of 1866 one or two castes were outcasted for eating in relief kitchens, etc. They calmly proceeded to make themselves into a new caste, and Hinduism never blinked an eyelid. In some cases where a tribe is concerned all that happens is that the tribe sets up a stone, calls it a Hindu god, and Brahmanism puts loving arms around it. It will be seen, therefore, that caste, while it is quick to punish is also strong to save. Its justification is that it has adaptability. It has fitted Hinduism like a glove, and, while it has divine sanction from the laws of Manu, it is also richly invaded by common sense. It has regulated Hindu India for centuries and made of her people a clean and sanctified race. No other system could have kept such a vast territory in unity. In ordinary circumstances the outlook of Madras would have been as different from the outlook of the Punjab as that of an Icelandic hunter from that of a Calabrian shepherd. And yet, under the Hindu caste establishment they continue to suck like brothers from the same religious breast.

What is to happen when we remove this strong and beautiful edifice? One of the most amazing things in modern history is the Indian's apparent desire for something that is to destroy his traditions as effectively as locusts destroy green leaves. We are told that if democracy is to succeed in India caste must be got rid of. Mr. Gandhi has attacked certain of its aspects with a holy vigour. Communal representation in India's new constitution is but a declared makeshift. We have, therefore, the desperate spectacle of nearly 300,000,000 people about to be liberated of all holy enjoinders. They are to be told that they are now "responsible" human beings with a voting number at the next general election; that caste is no more and that they can marry a coolie's widow or the daughter of a Brahman Devi. What is to be the 300,000,000 people's response?

Under the caste system there is no such thing as pauperisation, each sub-caste or family being responsible for those unfortunate enough to be non-earners. Without caste the poverty of India must rise like a ghostly Everest. It will demand bread. Democracy will give it a member of Parliament and a butcher's trade union. It will also demand a higher standard of living, a place in the sun and all the wearisome stock-in-trade of a happy people made miserable. We shall have strikes, and processions and hungry howlings at capital. There will be hordes of agitators and flocks of organising officials witnessed and applauded by a great cloud of professional politicians. Political parties will promise the moon and then discover that they cannot buy a brass tack. Our only hope is that India will settle down so to tame this bull in her china shop that Hinduism may be cleansed rather than destroyed and that caste may continue to protect the happiness of millions from the suffering of being a banyan tree in a polar garden. Certainly, if caste goes in India, Hinduism goes with it. Caste is just as much a part of the Brahman faith as prayer is a precept of the Christian. We can no more remove caste and leave Hinduism than we can destroy its paint and preserve a picture.

### *Hindu Morality*

Charges have been made against Hindu morality. This is particularly so in connection with marriage custom. I have found such charges to be seldom justified. Child marriages look bad. That much has to be admitted; but they are only an ugly coping for a beautiful wall. Child marriages are, indeed, the cause of India's strikingly high standard of female morality. Whatever the caste system has done it has made marriage a sacred institution and demanded a standard of feminine virtue unsurpassed in the world. A Hindu girl is usually married before the age of puberty for two reasons. The first is that she shall thus be preserved from men desiring promiscuous intercourse; the second is that the best Hindu



118 A Bengal Fisherman



119 A Vegetable Seller, Bombay





120 A Santal Tribesman



121 From Nepal

MOUNTAIN TRIBESMEN

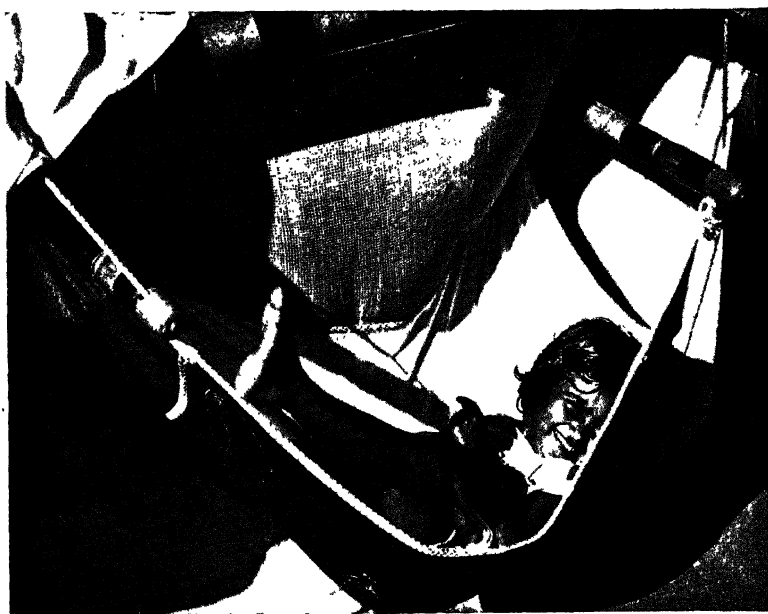
society abhors an old maid. It abhors old maids so much that orthodox respectability would as soon die as confess them. And so as soon as a girl is born to a high-class Hindu family her marriage becomes a source of anxiety. Suitable men are searched for, and, when found, frequently paid large sums to become husbands. There is never any question of the newly married girl living with her husband who is often just as undeveloped as she is. The contrary is an unjustifiable deduction sometimes made by Western minds much to their own and to their neighbour's confusion. All that happens is that the girl goes through the marriage ceremony. If this has been achieved she is free from social stigma for all time and preserved from the evils of passion. In certain instances, the prospective husband cannot be found. Either there is no male in the caste willing to marry her, or the girl's parents are too poor to pay a big enough dowry. No matter. The girl is married to something. It may be a tree, an iron pail, or a block of cement. An arrow is quite a favourite "husband" and so is a sword or a flower. Such "marriages," however, are not by any means general and are only resorted to in extreme cases. I have heard of a Brahman girl who died unwed. So profoundly was the family honour shocked that it paid some wretched creature of a man to marry her dead body!

Divorce is frowned upon. Only in the lower castes is it allowed, and even then it can be obtained only after much difficulty and the consent of the caste council. Substantial reasons such as the unfaithfulness of the wife or her inability to bear sons must be forthcoming. Widows can remarry only in certain low castes and where caste shows signs of receding in the face of modern conditions. No branch of its beneficial work has been so incorruptibly performed by caste as that in regard to marriage laws. A peculiarity of Hinduism is that while it allows surprising liberties in regard to doctrine it has always ruled conduct with an unrelenting hand. A Hindu is free to think as he likes but not to do as he likes.

Where the members of a caste can marry they can eat. Thus if a caste or sub-caste is exogamic its members will be allowed to take food with those from whom their wives can be drawn; but no caste eats with those who cannot supply its matrimonial requirements.

Rules as to personal cleanliness are iron. To a Westerner the ordinary Indian village is wholly lacking in hygiene. Stagnant water and household rubbish are allowed to become pestiferous. Nevertheless, inside the villagers' dwellings, rules and regulations are faultlessly in operation. Few cottages in England can claim the same standard of order and tidiness as that which obtains within the humblest dwelling in the Indian jungle. Religious ceremonial and bathing are closely observed by all castes. Untouchability is more severe in some districts than in others, but it is obviously developing into a stricture against unhygienic rather habits than against a caste condition. Like the development of the universal from the tribal God, untouchability and many other caste tabus must acquire a spiritual rather than a legal value. Some of the lower Indian orders deserve untouchability even from the most humane. There are sub-castes whose members eat rats and live like stray dogs. The health of the community demands that they should be limited in social intercourse. I am an untouchable myself. All Europeans are. And yet I have shaken hands with, and sat at the same festive board as, the highest Brahmans. There was no sign of their being defiled, and I am certain that few of them went through any expiatory cleansing as a result of their contact with me. Untouchability, therefore, is not always untouchable.

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122, 123, 124 Hindu Children



125 Mr. Gandhi



126 Sir Henry Gidney

## CHAPTER VIII

## MR. GANDHI'S INFLUENCE

MR. GANDHI has puzzled many. People in Britain simply cannot understand a man who leads his countrymen in revolt and then comes to London in a dhoti. They understand an out-and-out revolutionary, but this man is a revolutionary plus something else. He loves all mankind. A revolutionary loves only his revolution. Mr. Gandhi hates to be regarded as other than a plain Hindu who is guilty of much unorthodoxy, but who lives life as he conceives it to be best for his countrymen. And yet in India he is a saint. People think of him as they think of Vishnu or Siva. Wherever he goes is holy ground. Despite the passing of the political leadership of the Congress, or Indian National Party to other hands, Mr. Gandhi is consulted on all vital matters of policy. The oracle at Delphi was not more serenely trusted. In Mr. Gandhi divinity has her seat and wisdom her province.

There are people in India who may dispute this. It is doubtful if the Mohammedans look up to him as the Hindus do. But Mr. Gandhi is not a Mohammedan; he is a Hindu partaking of all the Hindu foundations of outlook. He would be the first to deny that he is faithful to all the forces of Hindu tradition; at the same time, he is to Hinduism what rocks are to the earth's crust. I have read practically every word Mr. Gandhi has uttered, and all his doctrines are as native as the air of Benares. Whether he knows it or not, he lives, acts and speaks India. Hinduism has produced no greater or truer son for nearly a thousand years.

Mr. Gandhi has been attacked because his philosophy is contrary to the accepted standards of modern life. He has been described as a dreamer and a mystic; a man whose main realisations are in a world other than this one. When he came to this country to the Round Table Conference, people

said he was like a scraggy Moses who had fallen into a London fog.

The truth is that Mr. Gandhi has no philosophy and is about as much a dreamer as a Midland burgh surveyor or the governor of the Bank of England. All that Mr. Gandhi is is a Hindu. He personifies the Hindu mind. Very little of what Mr. Gandhi does or says is contray to what Hinduism has done and said for thousands of years. That may not explain much but it does throw some light on the continual inability of Western interests to absorb Eastern ideas. In another section of this book I deal with the Hindu religion. Those who read that section will discover much that is not usually associated with the Christian world. Hinduism would be untrue to herself if she did not present a puzzle to Europeanism. As far as Europeanism is concerned the Hindu lives life upside down. To the West life is a tiny spark against a great darkness; to the East life is a dark smudge against a great light. The West prays for eternal life; the East strives for eternal death. Later evidences in Europe declare for a fatter, wealthier and more comfortable life. To India life is a vulgar form of disease utterly repugnant even to the rudiments of culture. Indian philosophy and Aryan religion are jointly directed towards an escape from life. It is to them the negation of the true reality; the enemy of that sweet unknowingness which is the aim of all rightly directed Hindu living. There is no peace, no beauty, no truth in life; only a vast malignant disorder. It is to death what a monster is to a fragrant flower. Death is not merely extinction. It is deliverance, rest, safety. In it is the perfect fulfilment of the soul's craving; unhaunted sleep and that absence of discord which human foolishness has associated with decay. Every selfish or graceless act is a strengthening of the monster of life and a blow at the fragrant flower of death. Life's grim appetite is fed with ignorance, desire and earthly ambition; death's pure soul is realised through contemplation, humility and unworldliness. But men seldom achieve release

from life in one incarnation. The standard of purification is too high. A succession of pure, unselfish lives is needed.

Mr. Gandhi, as I have said, is not orthodox. But Hinduism scarcely knows the word. It is more sweetly reasonable than Christianity. It laughs at niggling definitions. To it many of our doctrinal squabbles are as childish as discussions on how many marbles would be required to fill a canal on Mars. Hinduism ignores details and keeps an eye on essentials. Her scale of values is not broken in Mr. Gandhi and that is all she concerns herself with. Mr. Gandhi's scale of values is red revolution to the West. It says that a shilling is only precious if you make it so. His whole outlook declares that the West is artificial; that it creates realities from shadows and makes things of no account into eternal verities. The West says: "You must be practical; man lives by looking after his own interests; nations exist by being strong and powerful. Peoples are of account only if they are progressive." All these conclusions, Mr. Gandhi points out, are from a faulty premise. Man must be practical only if he turns life upside down in order to make it fit his thesis. Since life is something that bars the way to bliss, where is man's wisdom in making it into a thing for ministering to his interests? Peoples who are progressive are of account only if they are irrational enough to believe in progress. Since progress, whatever it is, can be as much real value to the chief end of man as a metaphor is to a mountain, why fall down and worship it? To Mr. Gandhi and Hinduism the West and not the East is the true idolator.

It is useless for the West to attempt escape by saying that since we have got into the wrong train it would be dangerous to jump out. That may be so, but it does not justify the West's desire to make India a fellow passenger. Should Mr. Gandhi succeed in divesting India of every shred of British guidance or protection, India would undeniably fall a prey to some other nation. That must be admitted. An attitude that despises life is not gloriously fitted to defend life. But



what is material conquest to Hinduism? Differences in man's material circumstances, whatever they are, should not affect him since they are of no account.

Here Mr. Gandhi's lack of orthodoxy can be seen. He does care about the circumstances in which an alien government places a people. He cares because of the consequences. India has not been true to herself because of Western influences. Western influences have come to India mainly on the back of British officials and British merchants. Therefore, Mr. Gandhi wants to free India from the British. He does not chide either the British official or the British merchant. Both, he says, have upheld with honour and integrity the traditions of their race. He has the profoundest admiration for Britain and her sturdy sons. All that he condemns is her attitude to life. And he condemns it from a sincere conviction of its falseness. The influence of the West on India is greater than many believe. Education on modern lines has religiously ruined the average Hindu. It has poisoned his mind; it has made him something that is neither flesh, fowl nor good red herring. He is a Hindu and yet he is not a Hindu. He claims, and proudly so, kinship with the great Hindu race, but he has been taught to think as a German, an American or an Englishman. In such circumstances how can we expect him to be happy? His right hand wants what his left deplures. He is torn between racial allegiances and intellectual bias. This Mr. Gandhi has seen. The evil of the British connection with India lies not in the fact that it has deprived India of her nationality but in the fact that it insists on educating India in a British way. India has her own education, but it is as different from the West's education as her outlook is different from the West's outlook. It is largely a religious education. Behind Hindu law are the Shastras; behind Hindu religion are the Upanishads. If a man learns the true way to release he possesses more wisdom than all the universities in the world can give him. Western education teaches man how to weigh the sun and to count the proteins in his grilled steak;

Eastern education tells man the principles of the universe and helps him to a sanctified happiness within the caste. We have refused to tell India about the principles of the universe because we are too ignorant. All we are able to teach is the time it would take for the Coronation Express to cross the Milky Way. We cannot tell man how to attain sanctified happiness because we ourselves are neither sanctified nor happy. Mr. Gandhi's wisdom has seen through our shams. He knows that in the Indian religious philosophy there is more wisdom than in a millennium of John Locke and David Hume. Man's felicity springs not from the fatness of his land or the number of his cattle, but from the quality of his peace with life and her principles. Accordingly, Mr. Gandhi laughs at Western education. He laughs at it because he has partaken of it and knows how weak and blubbery it is. He has perceived that if India is to be happy in her heritage of wisdom she must throw off this shallow and self-deceived sophistry. That has been his lifework. It has made him great and glorious. But a simpler soul never breathed. All he has done is to be himself, a Hindu. There is no mystery about him. All the sweat and worry of the West to understand him has been caused by the strange idea that a scientific outlook compared with a religious outlook is not like a dungcart beside a royal chariot.

Mr. Gandhi's method is non-co-operation. He desires his followers to refuse to co-operate in the functions either of the governing or the governed. Law, to him, is non-existent as far as it does not concern the welfare of Hinduism. He would buy not from, neither would he use the products of the West. He desires India to cast off the West as a snake casts off its skin, quietly and without violence. Violence is not Hinduism; it is something which is extraneous to it.

Can we not see in this quiet, strong indifference to the West the clearest statement of the Hindu outlook? Selfish participation in life makes a man unfit for release from life. Saintry knowledge and a saintly calm; these are the requirements

of bliss from non-bliss. All life should be reduced to its simplest elements. We can never despise life from an easy-chair. Quiet, wise suffering; such are the wings of the soul. A knowledge of the truth and a following thereof is but a crucifying of life until it gives us up to the painless sleep of the Hindu heaven. Gandhism, therefore, crucifies itself to defeat Britain and to deny life. A defeat of Britain is the essence of Gandhism; a denial of life the essence of Hinduism. Gandhism welcomes its crucifixion because it is the way to release, first, from the West and then from life. The West and life are its compound enemy. It fights both by non-cooperation.

Recently Mr. Gandhi's political policy has been polluted. A certain section of the Congress Party have reintroduced the Council-entry programme. It has, unfortunately, succeeded. Such unwise tactics were tried over a decade ago when the late C. R. Das led political legionaries to so obstruct the work of the old legislative councils as to make them impossible. It failed then as I hope it fails now. By so doing Hinduism is defiling her hands. She is like a prayer meeting learning to dance the hornpipe.

I

CHAPTER IX  
THE DEFENCE OF INDIA

I CAN deal with the defence of India only as a layman. I have no military knowledge; but I have seen parts of the region where the defence of India is mostly concentrated. It is calculated to reduce courage to a minimum and intellect to an anachronism. Vague, hot hills and oven-like plains; everything gnarled and stunted; sharp, hard contours quivering in sunlight; raw corries warted with desert bush and volcanic boulder; days that eat the flesh from one's bones; nights when steady, cruel stars pour down frosty chills on a naked, unearthly land. Such are my impressions of the North-West Frontier. I have the utmost admiration for those of our race who stand by this sun-stricken Thermopylae in order that jute growers in Bengal and cotton merchants in Bombay may faint or fail not.

When I first beheld the *jat* of the Punjab at work I thought he of all men was the most sun-beaten. After seeing the Frontier, I changed my mind. There can be few places on this earth more calculated to create a wholesome fear of Hell. There, far without the bosom of civilisation, men sit and watch. More, they sit and suffer. The whole atmosphere of the place is suffering. The very hills suffer; so do the poor struggling trees and the spiky, bottle-green shrubs. Rocks crack in the sun and escarpments grow raw and bleached. Rivers rush from a region which God has forsaken, and streams thank Providence if they cannot be eaten up by an Afridi's camel.

Here at Hell's gate men sit and watch. They watch the Wazirs, the Mahsuds, the Sheranis, the Afridis, the Jowakis and the Turis. And when they think they have watched them sufficiently there are plenty of others equally capable of damage. Through the Khyber and neighbouring passes has

come every invader of India since the dawn of history. The only exception is Britain. India's frontiers are secure elsewhere. The Himalayas guard her further east, and the sea with the Imperial Navy wraps around her on the east, south and west a blue protection. Only on the north-west do we fear conquest. The Afghans are friendly, but the Russians are not—at least not always. Russia has threatened India before; she may do so again. But even if she does not there are others. We live in uncertain days. Peace speeches are like showers in a Bengal monsoon; and yet armies grow in size and increase in mobility. Vigilance, therefore, is needed on India's North-West Frontier. Vigilance not only concerning the tribes but also concerning the hostile nations of the world.

British troops are there and so are great numbers of Indian troops. The Royal Air Force has done magnificent things on this arid torment. When revolution paralysed Afghanistan in 1928 on the fall of Amanullah, it carried British and foreign nationals from Kabul to safety without a single hitch. For troops—British and Indian—and Royal Air Force, there must be general admiration. And yet down in the fan-cooled legislative halls of Bengal and Bombay men have criticised the North-West Frontier forces. They have said that they cost too much; that they are there to intimidate rather than to defend. Easy for the glib to speak; a week on the Frontier would make them speak less. I have travelled with soldiers from Peshawar on the Frontier mail. They bore the marks of their Calvary. They were like men who had been gnawed at by some slow disease. Sallow of cheek and sharp of bone they had the dull, lustreless eyes of those who had looked on the pristine ferocity of things. They spoke little. Such men seldom do. There are forces in nature which make speech a mockery. To me their souls seemed bleached—bleached in the terrible unmercy of things; the glaring cruelty of hills, the quivering agony of plains.

On British territory between the administered area on the



127 Afridi Watch Towers near the Khyber Pass



128 Snipers . . .



129 . . . and their Mark  
THE KHYBER PASS

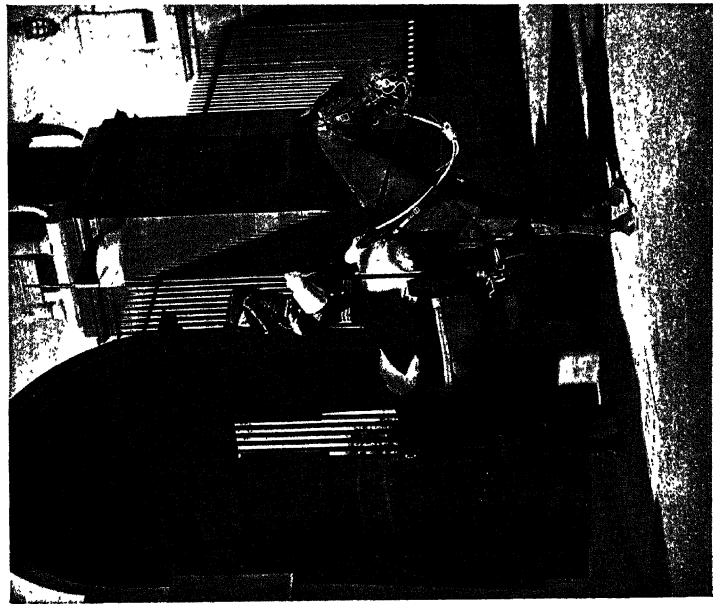
North-West Frontier Province side and the Afghan border (or Durand line) dwell the bravest fighting-men in the world. The Great War made these tribes much more formidable than before because the overspill of rifles and ammunition was so great that they are now capable of putting into battle something like 100,000 modernly armed fighters. They fear no foe. Centuries of privation have made them like men of iron. They will lie all day in biting sunlight without a crumb of bread or a drop of water as still as the grey rocks of their native mountains. They live by war and its spoils. They could scarcely do otherwise. In such a country agriculture is a weak and febrile thing; it does not suffice to keep starvation from the tribal settlements. And so out to the hills go the Wazirs and the Afridis and the Mahsuds. Merchants and travellers needs must use the mountain passes. If the tribes are given a chance they rob the merchants and steal from the travellers. Many of them are dead shots; all of them can stalk an enemy for days.

In their breasts burn the fires of a terrible independence. They kill at sight anything inimical to their liberty. To conquer them would demand their almost complete extinction. That is why the defenders of India have never done so. They have contented themselves with waiting and watching combined recently with what has been termed a policy of peaceful penetration. Roads have been built through the tribal territory, the less truculent of the Frontier dwellers have been made into a kind of a policemen, and, generally speaking, judicious sums are being paid to wild villagers to behave like reasonable human beings. This policy has had some success. It may have more in the future as the tribal calibre approximates more to civilised conditions. But at the back of most Frontier wars is the ache of hunger. A foodless man is a savage. He is a savage even in Mile End or Piccadilly. How much more is he a savage where the very streams hiss like snakes? The Sheranis, the Mahsuds, the Afridis and the terrible Wazirs attack the British defenders of India because they want rifles

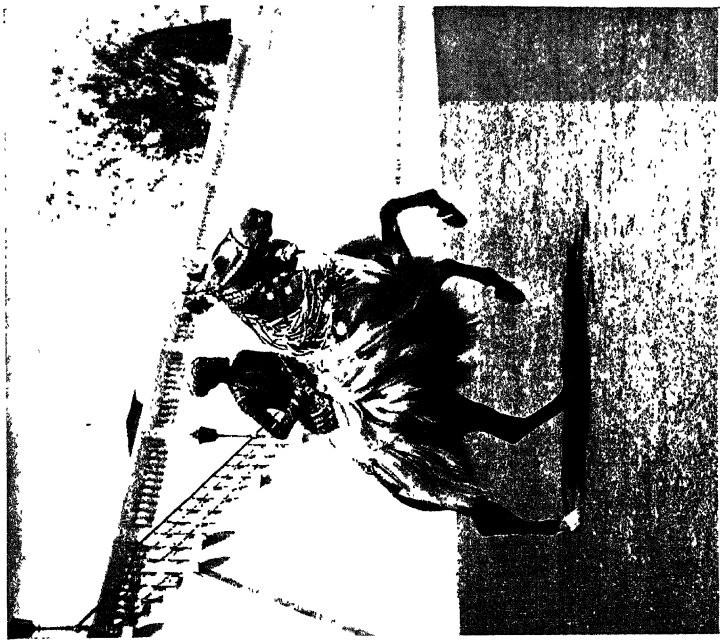


and food, and they know that the British defenders of India possess both. Each tribe is proud of its fighting achievements; all live under primitive laws where blood for blood is ethically accepted. Tribes can go to war with each other, but the threat to their liberty is a strong veto against intercommunal discord. They fight valiantly tribe beside tribe when a common enemy appears. Until these people are freed from the torments of want can they be civilised? It is easy to be good when the larder is full; not so easy when it is empty.

I hate to think that such brave men are doomed to the loss of their prized independence. Tribes who can sacrifice so ungrudgingly for the same precious thing as the British Empire has always been associated with must gain the sympathy of fair and reflective minds. And yet they are a menace; a mance to India and the graces of progress which she represents. Is there not in such a situation a mighty ethical conflict?



130 Mounted Sentry, Delhi



131 Exercising the Maharaja's Horse



132 Bengali Bullock Cart

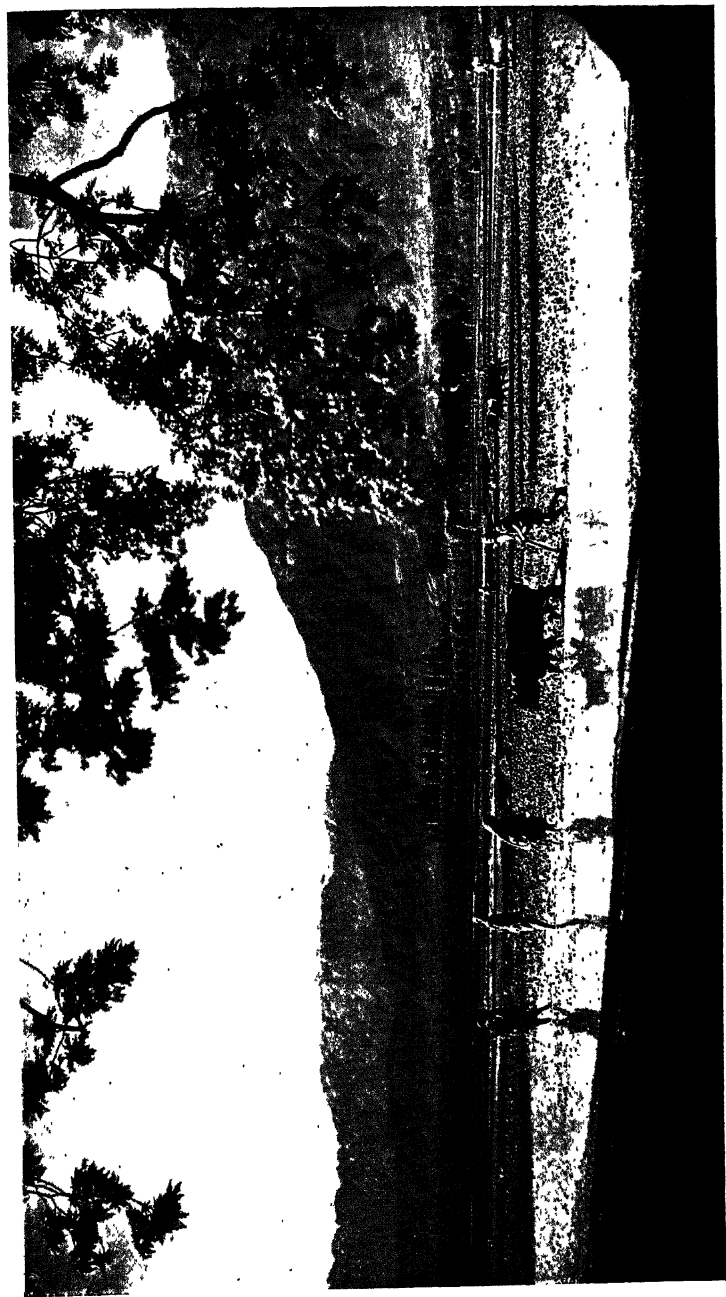
## CHAPTER X

### AGRICULTURE

INDIA is above all things an agricultural country. Only a very small percentage (7 per cent) of her people are independent of agriculture for a living. But agriculture in the East is different from agriculture in the West, not alone as regards climate and crop but also as regards method. There are few farms as we know them in Britain; chiefly villages with parcels of land surrounding them. Tillage is primitive, and scientific farming little understood. In most districts a light wooden plough drawn by a single bullock scratches the soil, and there are no harrowing or drilling operations. As the climate of India is usually too hot rather than too cold for perfect nitrification there is no "frosting" period in the winter. Rotation of crops is an ideal rather than a doctrine in India. The *ryots* (farmers or cultivators) have tested its benefits, but simply cannot afford it. Their life is one unrelaxing race against poverty and to allow even one small field to lie fallow for a year would mean unbearable loss. I discuss in a chapter on "Village Problems" the causes of this poverty and need not, therefore, do other than mention it here. Government has done much both to relieve the poverty and to establish the *ryot* on progressive lines, but, beyond notable advances here and there, Indian farming is still backward in comparison with that of Europe. The soil varies. Where it is good it is exceedingly good; where bad very bad. The "black cotton" soil of India is the best in the world, while in the desert areas it is almost the worst. Where the Government has been not entirely unsuccessful is in encouraging the use of the best seed. The area sown in India under new and improved varieties of wheat and rice seed was, in 1924, about 2,000,000 acres. The use of improved cotton seeds was even more marked in the same year.

As far as irrigation is concerned the British connection with India has been one of the most beneficial in the colonial history of the world. Literally, deserts have been made to rejoice. A recent calculation declares that out of a total sown area of 257,000,000 acres in India, over 47,000,000 were irrigated. The methods vary. The canal system has been largely employed in the northern districts, while in the south where there are no very large rivers, storage schemes and wells have been popular. It is in the extension and perfection of the canal system that the British Government deserves such solid credit. The splendid Ganges canal system in northern India has over 1,200 miles of main channels and 6,500 miles of distributaries. In Madras and Sindh vast and successful projects have been carried through, but one of the largest of such schemes in the world is the famous Sukkar Barrage in Sindh. By it the waters of five rivers of the Punjab are stemmed to the benefit of nearly 6,000,000 acres.

India's most important crop is rice. The total value of her export has, of course, been affected by the separation of Burma, but it is still considerable. The policy of the Indian provinces is to become self-supporting as regards rice, but obviously some are more suitable for the crop than others. Rice likes a heavy soil with plenty of rain, and it is, therefore, mainly found in deltaic and floodable areas such as Bengal, Bombay, Central Provinces, etc. Next to rice comes the great variety of millets and pulses. Wheat is chiefly found in the United Provinces and the Punjab. Owing to the irrigation schemes introduced in recent years, indeed, northern India is now one of the most important granaries of the British Empire. The total export of wheat is over 1,000,000 tons per annum, Britain buying about 70 per cent of it. Bombay and the Central Provinces export something like 750,000 tons of cotton every year. Ground nuts, sesamum, rape or mustard and linseed are grown to the extent of over 14,000,000 acres, their



133 Ploughing Rice Fields in Northern India



134 A South India Paddy Field



135 Cultivating in Kashmir

RICE CULTURE

export value being nearly 26,000,000 sterling. Barley, maize and fodder occupy 5,000,000 acres and sugar 4,000,000 acres.

Tea is a highly important product of India. Assam is regarded as the home of the tea plant, and it is natural that this province should be the most outstanding producer. European capital has developed the industry very substantially during the present century. In 1885 the area under tea in India was 283,925 acres, the yield from which was 71,525,977 pounds. To-day the area is nearly 800,000 with a yield approaching 364,000,000 pounds. The value of India's tea exports is £21,000,000 annually, and of this Great Britain absorbs 90 per cent. Coffee has been introduced into certain districts of Bengal.

India's cattle position is still discouraging. Cows yield small quantities of poor milk. There are over 150,000,000 cattle in British India, and bullocks and buffaloes form the main draught animals. Humped cattle are the most common. In certain respects they are picturesque in appearance and their patience and endurance are remarkable. Fawn-coloured on the upper parts of the body, they are usually pale cream under the belly and on the lower parts of the legs. The way they nod their heads while walking or trotting is very charming. There is a famous trotting breed of bullocks bred in the Central Provinces, while the large and majestic oxen of Gujarat in Bombay and Haryana in the Punjab are popular where loads are heavy and the soil sandy. The agricultural authorities have done much to weaken the menace of rinderpest among Indian cattle. Buffaloes are popular in the wet deltaic districts, not only because they are more weighty but also because they like to wallow in the numerous silty pools to be found in such districts. These buffaloes yield good *ghi* (a kind of butter), but are rather uncertain in temper. They seem to take a violent dislike to certain human beings, and, as they possess long spreading horns and enormous foreheads, their charge is not by any means relished. I have



always considered an Indian delta buffalo the ugliest animal in the world.

Forests are an important item in the economics of India, and since 1865 they have come under official supervision.

## CHAPTER XI

### EDUCATION

EDUCATION in India has had two views focussed upon it. There has been the view that education is but an intensification of indigenous learning and culture; there has also been the view that European achievements in the mental sphere should be offered to India. Around these two at first rather vague ideas developed a battle of stupendous proportions. Arguments for either view were organised into battalions. It was held tenaciously that what a people learned was what a people wanted to learn, and it was not the prerogative of another people, however wise and great, to slay a system with which they did not happen to agree or to ridicule the quality of ideas which differed from their own. Equal zeal was forthcoming for the standpoint that knowledge was a trust rather than a monopoly; that what men had wrested from the wrack of human circumstance was a *cadeau du ciel* and the property of the entire human race. To refuse, therefore, to make such blessings known among the nations was equal to a retardation of Heaven's purposes on earth. Until this educational battle had been lost and won in England the Government in India had to operate without a policy.

But missionaries had not waited on the decree of Vigrid. They had commenced the study of the vernaculars of India with a view to making them a vehicle for the spreading of Christian doctrine. The Baptist Mission at Serampur, near Calcutta, were the first to give Bengali the dignity of a literary language. They discovered in it beauties and delicacies of expression which would have confounded the Macaulay warriors in England had they been able to realise their worth. Slowly the influence of missionary tillage had its effect. Hindu writings were increasingly studied. The Forest philosophies captivated the quieter and more refined thinkers of the West.

India's claim to have educational attention was already admitted, but it was not yet clear that the Western inheritance in the sphere of real understanding was different from rather than superior to that of the East. The recognition in 1833 of the work of the missionaries by the British authorities was possibly more a judgment on results than a definite indication of policy, but it was a step in the right direction even if an unconscious one. The missionaries were not producing revolution; that was the measure by which their labours were assessed. Any activity that did not create a breach of Pax Britannica was tolerated if not mildly blessed by the Charter Acts.

Meanwhile, the battle in England had been fought and won. In 1835 one of the most vital decisions ever made with regard to India was expressed by Lord William Bentinck when he said, "The great object of the British Government would be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India." The discoveries of the West were to be sown as good seed on the baking plains of the East. Lord Macaulay's balanced prose and groomed argument had sent the Orientalists to flight! India might have discovered that man was a shadow of an all-pervading divinity and proved that that shadow is never found out of association with its creator; India might have shone sweetly as a morning star in the philosophical firmament long before the first stone of the Parthenon was laid, and might have given to human motive a grace and sweetness unparalleled in history; all this was as filthy rags in the sight of a generation that believed in a round earth and the laws of motion. India must read Locke and listen to Knox; she must understand that every time she clasps her fingers in prayer the stock of universal energy has been diminished in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics.

Thus in 1854 Sir Charles Wood's famous despatch on educational system was issued. If India was to be perfumed by the West the method of her perfuming had to be



136 A follower of Gandhi at his spinning wheel



137 Engineering students at Benares University  
The New India



138 A Scribe



139 A Brass Worker

determined. There followed a period of tremendous energy. Schools, colleges, teachers, examinations; these were the main things sought for. Gradually the three essentials spread, and India had her first sitting with her new Gamaliel.

The consequences need not be emphasised here, but it should be noted that the adoption of a Western rather than an Eastern bias for Indian education gave rise to two major evils. It turned Indian culture from something natural to something artificial, and thus created a nausea in which was born a whole mass of discontent. Youths learned not because learning attracted them, but because by it they could secure a status in Government service. The second evil was the clearly material or secular basis of the educational system. It ignored moral values. To the natural Hindu that was a shock. It was like giving him a temple without a god. What was the use of learning if by learning one found not the wisdom that is Brahma?

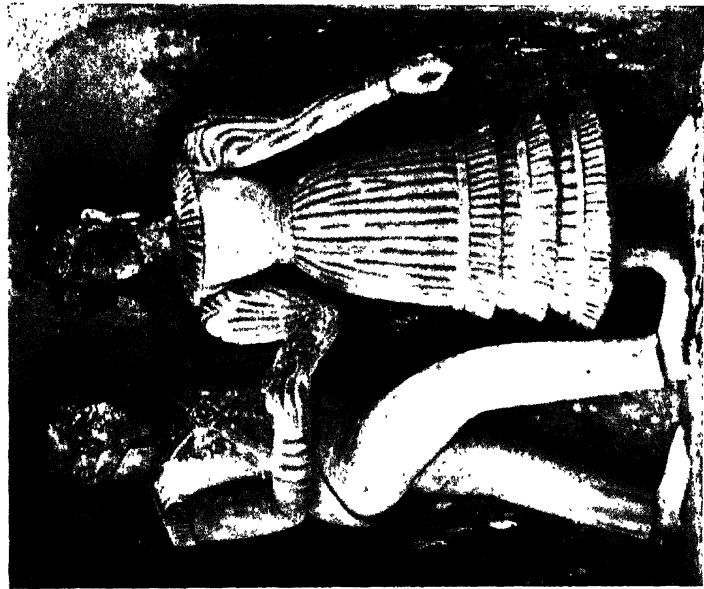
The educational system has a fairly simple machinery. Public funds provide for a number of educational institutions and the teachers in these are Government officials. There are also a number of schools managed by local authorities, although in them Government control is an important reality. As has been indicated, missionary effort did much to stimulate a study of the vernaculars. Such pioneering effort had expanded into enterprisingly run schools under the control of the various missionary bodies. To these Government gives its benediction in the form of a grant-in-aid, but on condition that a certain control be allowed on the part of its educational officers.

It was early discovered that the method briefly outlined had grave faults, and both Lord Curzon and Lord Minto moved strongly for amendment. There were attempts at stimulating vocational rather than purely literary education. Universities were vomiting graduates from Agra to Madras; unemployable M.A.'s were beginning to propagate ideas that had a disagreeable odour in the nostrils of Pax Britannica. Lord Minto

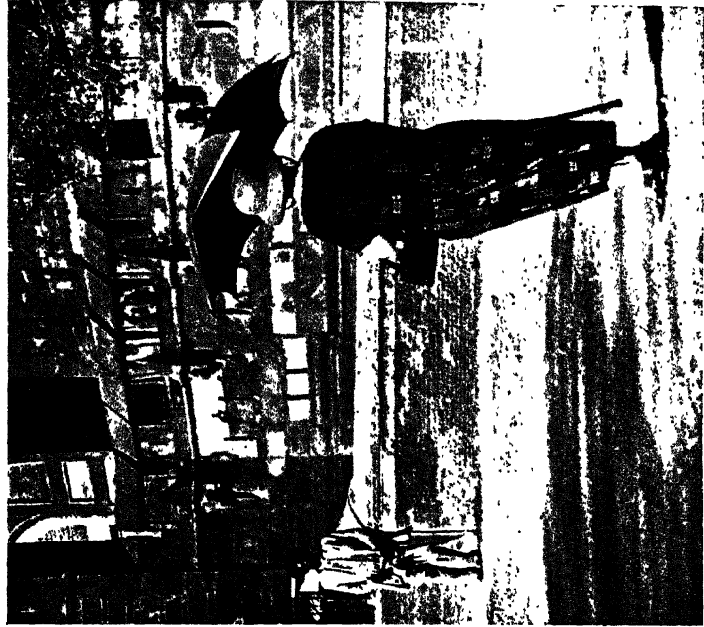
established a special Ministry of Education which did its best; but it was not until 1919 that the Commission under Sir Michael Sadler was appointed with terms of reference which denoted that remedies were sincerely sought. This Commission condemned wholesale. It declared that the whole conduct of secondary and university education was wrong; it aimed, among other things, at a relieving of universities of vast numbers of undergraduates and an encouragement of the teaching and residential type of universities.

Official action was taken, but the shortage of money has been a serious obstacle to progress. The establishment of intermediate institutions, for instance, was largely paralysed because financial means were not forthcoming. The subject has inspired unofficial complaint in nearly all the provincial legislatures of India. Enemies of the Macaulay tradition have grown in number and in sinew, and in many instances the comparative failure of the Government of India to make the educational structure more in tune with the country's cultural and economic aspirations has had an enriching effect on party polemics.

Education in India, therefore, marches with tardy steps. At the present day only 130 in every thousand males and 22 in every thousand females can read and write. Several provinces in a desperate effort to remedy matters have adopted the principle of compulsory education; but compulsory education as an ideal is different from compulsory education as a going concern. Everywhere money is needed. The country simply cannot afford real progress in education. It is too undeveloped; its taxable back is too weak. Besides, there are other difficulties. Western education to certain castes is like heresy to certain religions. Poverty is also in powerful opposition. Parents want their children to earn rather than to learn. Even those who realise that the future is for the educated and not for the ignorant allow their children to attend school only until they catch a smattering of knowledge. The country is being flooded with such dangerous persons. Their short

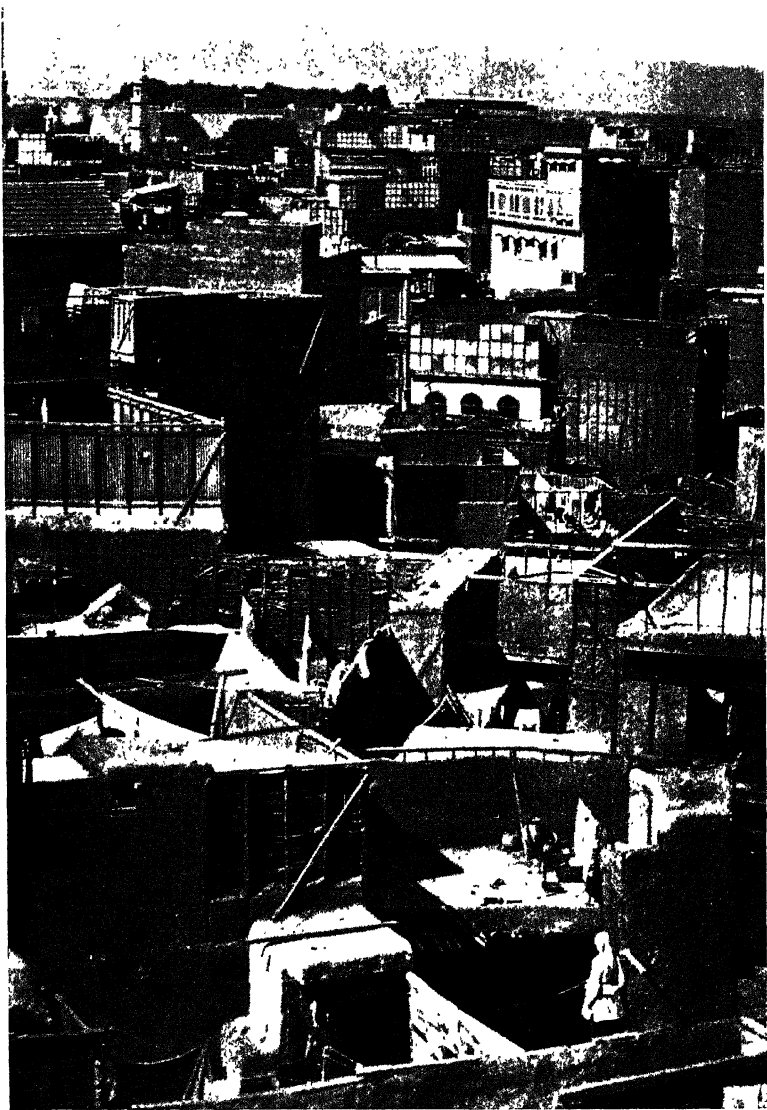


140 The Eighteen-thirties



141 The Nineteen-thirties





PESHAWAR

142 The Roofs of the Native Quarter

period at school has sufficiently spoiled their simplicity to make them mildly arrogant; they rebel at family traditions and frequently neglect all but the ceremonial content of religion.

For those who desire a statistical view of female educational progress in India it may be stated that in 1896 female pupils in India numbered in round figures, 4,000,000; in 1921 the number had doubled; in 1926 it had reached 10,000,000. In many parts of India there are impressive signs of female "emancipation." Bengal perhaps leads the way; but Bombay and Madras are in close pursuit. Physical exercises and games are capturing the Hindu girl's imagination. I have seen some excellent gymnastic displays by college girls in different parts of India, and it is plain that the notion of *purdah* so vitally opposed to female education is losing ground.

Mohammedans are not so eager for modern secular learning as the Hindu; but the former are giving up much of their prejudice, and in certain divisions of Mohammedanism schools are being generously maintained and intelligently managed. His Highness the Aga Khan, for instance, plays an important and progressive part in the education of his followers.

Education in India, however, is now a matter for which the new regime must be responsible. It cannot be doubted that the main difficulties with the new as with the old authoritative system will be of a financial nature.

## CHAPTER XII

### INDIA'S NEW CONSTITUTION

WITH the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935 a new India was born. It was by no means a miraculous birth even if the head of the British Zeus had to be cracked before she could come forth in all her beauty and grace. India by that act lost Burma. For many years Burma had grumbled at being a "Cinderella" province. She declared that the Central Government at Delhi had a rooted contempt for her; that it paid scanty attention to her needs but was exceedingly careful to see that she contributed the maximum in a financial respect to India's ponderous requirements. Besides, Burma argued, Burmans were not Indians. The Indians were Aryans; the Burmans Mongolians. Nor could any similarity be found in culture or religion. Burma had both a culture and a religion of her own. She was neither Mohammedan nor Hindu; she was Buddhist. All that she had in common with India was trade. India bought Burma's rice and Burma bought India's piece-goods, coal, etc. Burma was willing and anxious to trade with India, but not to be her political maidservant. India, all credit to her, saw Burma's point. The matter was discussed at the Round Table Conferences, and the separation of Burma provided for in the 1935 Act.

But what India has lost in Burma she has gained in status. She is now no longer a bewildered fold divided into sheep and goats. She is now not a fold at all but a wide, sunlit meadow on which the lowly and the highly placed feed from the same pasturage. Formerly, there were reserved and transferred subjects. The transferred subjects were under popular control and the reserved autocratically administered through the Governors. Now there are few reserved subjects. All are under popular control, excepting defence, ecclesiastical affairs and foreign policy, although certain powers have been given

to the Viceroy and Governors which in their cumulative effect are meant to be the legislative embodiment of a care for India's minorities and her financial health. Provision has been made for the political co-operation of the Indian States should they be willing to comply with certain curtailments of the powers exercised by their individual rulers in exchange for services to be rendered by the federal authority. The provinces have been given autonomy. The Governors, however, are empowered to withhold assent from measures which in their view are inimical to the spirit of the new Act. The vote is available to all persons over twenty-one years of age who have the necessary qualifications. The franchise is surrounded by different conditions in different provinces, but, as a general rule, it is based on a property qualification ascertainable from land revenue, income-tax and municipal tax payments. Communal representation remains. This means that the electoral arrangements are so designed as to give separate representation to distinct races, communities and interests. Under the new Act a high percentage of India's adult population will be enfranchised. Women, the depressed classes, industrial labour, special interests, small landholders and cultivators, etc., are all now given representation. Under the new Act a federation is visualised and provided for. There is a federal executive similar to those of other Imperial federations. The entire executive power of the federation will be held by the Governor-General; his ministers shall "aid and advise" him, but must retain the confidence of the legislature. The Governor-General's special powers are practically duplicated by those of the Governors of the provinces and include: (1) the prevention of any grave menace to the peace or tranquillity of India; (2) the safeguarding of the country's financial credit; (3) the interest of minorities; (4) rights of members of the public services; (5) the prevention of discrimination; (6) penal treatment to British or Burmese goods imported into India; (7) rights of Indian States and their rulers.

There will be two chambers in the federal and in the main provincial legislatures. The Federal Houses will be the Council of State comprising not more than 104 States' representatives and 156 British Indian representatives elected by popular vote, of whom six will be chosen by the Governor-General; it will be a permanent body, but a third of its members will retire every three years; a Federal Assembly consisting of 125 States' representatives and 250 representatives of British India mainly elected by the provincial legislatures. The life of the Federal Assembly will last five years. When half of the Indian States have agreed to enter the federation an address from both Houses of Parliament will be presented to H.M. the King. A royal proclamation may then be made bringing the federation into being.

The Act shows great liberality, and one of its most attractive features is the possibility of its gradual growth into an instrument holding the completest Dominion status for India without a general reconstruction of the country's political foundations.

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CHAPTER XIII  
THE ANGLO-INDIANS

IN Hindustan the Anglo-Indians form a brave but despised community. They are, as the name suggests, the offspring of European and Indian parents. But by neither Europeans nor Indians are they rapturously claimed. Their bravery consists in that they have done much, and are doing more, to carve out for themselves an independent economic future. The new Government of India Act provides for them to a limited extent only. In the past, Government was not unkindly to the Anglo-Indian. It saw in him a patient and willing servant whose knowledge of the country and its languages was an admirable asset. But an India in Indian hands creates a different atmosphere. The poor Anglo-Indian is neither a foreigner nor a native; he is something that the unimaginative hand of legislation has no model for; it, therefore, almost completely ignores him. He has little social status excepting in his own community, and for him caste and its graces are impossible.

And yet Anglo-Indians play a useful part in India. As railway officials they are unmatched; in the Customs services they can do much that a European would not consider and an Indian would not dare. The police are glad of them, and so are many commercial firms which need a European's services at a low salary. Many Anglo-Indians have worked under me in Calcutta and elsewhere. I have a deep respect for them. They have vices and frailties. Frequently, they lack dignity and more frequently they imitate the worst in humanity believing it to be the best. But when we remember that they have had little to sharpen observation and less to winnow experience we are forced to admit that they are a really remarkable community. They sometimes anticipate an insult because they have an unconscious knowledge of inferiority, but when

put on their honour they act bravely and wisely. Many of them have genius. As writers they are not unknown. As mechanics, clerks and petty officials there is no community in India to equal them.

Recently they have organised a land-purchase scheme which has more than the appearances of success. They have settled numbers of the more agriculturally minded of their community at a place called McCluskiegunge (named after the chief initiator of the scheme, Mr. McCluskie) in an endeavour to raise a breed of cultivators dealing on a co-operative basis. Much will depend on world prices as to whether this valorous attempt to strike new economic roots into the soil of India is to attain permanency or not, but as an indication of the community's resource and adaptability it cannot be overestimated. Their political leader for many years has been Sir Henry Gidney, a vigorous and undaunted personality who has won many a battle for his brethren.

Although he is capable of much mental work, the physique of the Anglo-Indian is relatively poor. If he could get rid of a certain weediness of body and stimulate more powers of determination he must win for himself a sure place in the new India. Despite his disabilities he is happy, genial and frequently witty. Within his own circle he exercises an expansive kindness and sympathy, while out in the open paths of competition he has displayed surprising initiative and common sense.

In self-organisation the community is weak. It often disintegrates on a petty squabble. The hard realism of the unheroic beats it. Lead it in a crusade of exulting adventure and it will follow with valorous enthusiasm, but do not ask it to wait in monotonous watchfulness. I am not sure, however, that this weakness is not the result of the community's unhappy ostracisation. It is forced in upon itself and has few opportunities of a wholesome general intercourse outside its own tidal limits. Social sourness comes to any human soil unless it is allowed open and natural conditions. There are about 140,000 Anglo-Indians in India, but many have emigrated to Burma.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CAN DEMOCRACY SUCCEED IN INDIA?

I AM not quite sure that democracy has succeeded anywhere. It certainly has not succeeded in Britain. That indeed, is Britain's salvation. All it has done is to maintain Britain as a kind of national grandmother who has never forgotten her first Sunday school lesson. Britain has carved out her own democracy. It is a democracy with a king, common sense and respect for tradition. Perhaps there are as many democracies as there are peoples to uphold them; if that is so one ought not to regard British democracy as singular. But there can be only one conception of "government by the people." And if democracy is government by the people I can see no country in the world where such an ideal was more realistically attained than in India herself. Her caste system is even a sensible kind of Sovietism. Each caste has its own governing body and that governing body is supreme in all matters concerning the material welfare of the caste's members. It neither accepts nor receives outside interference. Even the Brahmans treat it with respect, and only give their advice when asked for it on purely spiritual matters. The caste council or *panchayat* regulates not only the membership of the caste but also imposes penalties for breaches of the caste laws, organises charitable efforts for unfortunate families or individuals, supervises temples, and ceremonies of a religious nature, gives judgment on family quarrels, regulates marriages, investigates divorces where such are allowed, upholds the Hindu moral code, decides on employments, and generally moulds the environment of that section of society which concerns it. Even where considerable numbers of Hindus have been outcasted these form themselves into an outcast caste and go on living contentedly under their own *panchayat*.

It is true that in many instances the *panchayat* members are



either chosen for life or hold office under the law of heredity, but they consult the members of the caste on all important occasions. The territorial extent of the *panchayat's* supervision is wisely curtailed. As soon as it becomes unwieldy a division is made, so many villages being given to one *panchayat* and so many to another. Each *panchayat* is presided over by a headman who usually wields enormous influence. His officials are a splendid limitation. Frequently, he has but the assistance of a messenger who calls meetings, collects fines, reads minutes (when these are kept) and generally carries out his behests without question. Sometimes, in the more important castes, the headman may have a deputy chairman who presides at a meeting of the *panchayat* when he has more engrossing matters on his hands. The whole organisation is simple, unostentatious and brotherly. Opinions may be sharp and hard, but the *panchayat's* decision is very seldom called in question. The West's vulgar methodism is shunned. Often the discussion wanders. A betel chew may drag it from a stolen dhoti to the curse on a villager's paddy basket. But the East knows that to be human is best; that a rigid adherence to the same subject for a long time infects the temper and damages the judgment. Many an acrimonious corner in a *panchayat* discussion is rounded on the back of an appetising irrelevancy. Thus the Hindu hates method. It is too fraying to his temper.

But the point is that the Hindu governs himself in a very real sense. He knows every member of his *panchayat* and every member of his *panchayat* knows him. The caste or sub-caste is a brotherhood. The farce of electing a member of Parliament who comes and tells you what to do at the next general election is shunned. It was not even thought of until Britain filled India with political sophistry. The Hindu, like the ancient Greek, actually handles his problems. He does not wrap them up in tissue-paper and send them to his party organiser. The Hindu lives cheek by jowl with his government; the average Englishman is as near his government as Capella is to the Southern Cross. Caste problems in India

are not something dressed up in tar and feathers so that the party dervishes may dance around them. They are clear, unmagnified questions discussed sanely and not too intensely around the family fireside.

I am afraid I cannot love political whirlwinds which chase justice and bite off their own tails. The three mirages of modern reformers are justice, principle and logic. I do not know how far the three words are self-extinguishing, but they are found very frequently on the lips of honest men who desire life to be a more humane and beautiful thing, and still more frequently in the utterances of those who talk Olympian nonsense at election meetings. Imagination is better than principle; sympathy more practicable than justice, and common sense immensely more valuable than logic. We have gone to India with principle, justice and logic. Each has been a Pandora's box. The future of India is a hybrid. She can be now neither Hindu nor Christian. We have ruined her for both. She will likely grow up an Anglo-Indian in politics and a sooty lily in commerce.

And yet it could have been so different. All that was needed was the common endowment of imagination. In Britain imagination is a ghastly famine. At any rate, it is so hopelessly material as to be of little use. I would have given India a king, surrounded him with ministers selected by the *panchayats* not for their political views but for their personal character; reformed the caste system, modernised the attitude to untouchables and made the farce of Parliament a crime against the State. Under such a government India could have remained India. Our besetting sin is that we look on the universe as something to dress up in a Bond Street suit and a bowler hat. To our lasting shame, we have dressed India's God in an election speech and a New Delhi topee. We have droned prayers over the untouchables, forgetting that we are untouchables ourselves and that, man for man, there was more real happiness among the depressed classes in India than there is in the whole of England. All that the

untouchable problem needs is a slight correction of view. Untouchability is a misdemeanour; not a class. It should be applied only to those who neglect to carry out the Hindu injunction of cleanliness. If a man who does scavenging work refuses to wash himself he is a menace to society and, therefore, rightly becomes untouchable.

I know that this is not according to the original Hindu law, but it is according to the thoughts of many Hindus to-day. The severity of the early attitude towards untouchables was induced by the fact that they were largely a conquered class. That severity has weakened much. It would become but an enlightened form of ethics under a little sympathetic understanding. We must not forget that Christianity itself was a primitive savage once. It was only the other day that we burned the last witch.

Politically what we have done in India is to remove a holy mountain in order to sink a drain-pipe.

Many are troubled about the ethical aspect of our being in India. I was myself. Why should one race dominate another even in the mildest and most humane way? The philosophic roots of such a question are too deep and intricate for complete examination here; but Britain has always claimed for her colonisation enterprises the elevation and liberation of the peoples concerned. The people of India may have needed liberation from their own internal disorder at the time Britain took over her government, but that she had as much mental and spiritual elevation as any other country can be seen from a glance at her religious and philosophic history. That portion of India which has a voice demanded control of its own affairs. Britain has given such control on condition that it is used without bias. That much can be said in favour of Britain; but I am a sound believer in the moral law of the universe. Whether there is any ultimate value in it or not there is a retributive agency at work in human affairs. The acts of a nation like the acts of an individual not only express character but determine fate. All the complexities of modern

sophistication weaken not by one jot the conquering power of moral worth. Western civilisation claims much. It claims the light of knowledge where a "superstitious darkness" reigned. I am of opinion that there will always be "superstitious darkness" and that all that Western civilisation has done is to change its garments. But even admitting that knowledge is now a beacon where before it was but a possibility in the heart of a flint, there are higher values than it. Knowledge is but a means. If it is misused it is a curse. We tell generation after generation that there are so many atoms in a molecule and that without her Silurian fish the earth would not be half so glorious. Yet no hand comes from the darkness to show these enlightened children of ours that if a fairy's wand is used to stir pig's food it might as well never have been a fairy's wand. The moral responsibility of knowledge and the necessity for good citizenship should be taught in all our schools. The church is not a fold for all the virtues. I have never entertained such a delusion, but I am not ignorant enough to believe that her desertion is a mark of intellectual richness. She may have faiths unfounded on ascertainable fact. I have yet to hear of the piece of human knowledge which is based on ascertainable fact. Human knowledge has as much blindness as human faith. Our Western civilisation has a surfeit of knowledge and a famine of faith. Without faith there can be little real moral living, since morality based on utility is ornate savagery. Only in so far as we have some contribution to make to moral values can we claim merit from our connection with any country or any people. Conquest that is conquest and nothing else is its own ultimate retribution.

If it is in the destiny of Man that he should achieve a material salvation; that he should curl for himself a defensive circumstance like the ammonite of old and remain a masterful weevil in an everlasting apple, then all nations which strive for democracy are wise and splendid. By widening the powers and co-operations of man they are adding to his glory. Every conquest that gives us a more definite control

over the evolutionary threat which is absent from no created thing is a step onward and upward. And yet I cannot believe that a masterful weevil in an everlasting apple can be the purpose of that Inherent Wisdom which rules all nature and baffles all understanding. The only salvation possible by man's own powers is a material salvation, and a material salvation is worse than a spiritual damnation. Without struggle man would decline and die. If by a volition of mind we could level mountains and flood the desert the end of all things human would be in sight. Our very sinews demand the necessity of toil. When the weevil is secure in its everlasting apple it must die just because it is secure. Westernism proclaims the age of the blest on earth; Easternism declares that none but the holy can be happy. If the West is right then the spread of democracy is a kindly providence; if it is not then India and all nations which have risen to the bait of democracy are on a Stygian road. There are people both in England and in India who believe that we have given to the East a blessed thing; that our mission has been one of noble emancipation even if it were accompanied by the usual defects of human effort. They may be right. Only honesty of observation would wish them wrong. I frequently hope that all my scruples are groundless, but something tells me that man conquers nothing but his own delusions and then only to create new ones.

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